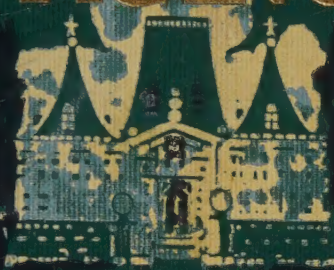
"SOMEWHERE IN FRANCE"



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"SOMEWHERE IN FRANCE"

With her eye for detail Marie observed that the young officer, instead of imparting information, received it.

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BY

RICHARD HARDING DAVIS

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TO
HOPE DAVIS

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"SOMEWHERE IN FRANCE"

"SOMEWHERE IN FRANCE"

MARIE GESSLER, known as Marie Chaumontel, Jeanne d'Avrechy, the Countess d'Aurillac, was German. Her father, who served through the Franco-Prussian War, was a German spy. It was from her mother she learned to speak French sufficiently well to satisfy even an Academician and, among Parisians, to pass as one. Both her parents were dead. Before they departed, knowing they could leave their daughter nothing save their debts, they had had her trained as a nurse. But when they were gone, Marie in the Berlin hospitals played politics, intrigued, indiscriminately misused the appealing, violet eyes. There was a scandal; several scandals. At the age of twenty-five she was dismissed from the Municipal Hospital, and as now—save for the violet eyes—she was without resources, as a *compagnon de voyage* with a German doctor she travelled to Monte Carlo. There she abandoned the doctor for Henri Ravignac, a captain in the French Aviation Corps, who, when his leave ended, escorted her to Paris.

The duties of Captain Ravignac kept him in barracks near the aviation field, but Marie he established in his apartments on the Boulevard Haussmann. One day he brought from the barracks a roll of blue-prints, and as he was locking them in a drawer, said: "The Germans would pay through the nose for those!" The remark was indiscreet, but then Marie had told him she was French, and any one would have believed her.

The next morning the same spirit of adventure that had exiled her from the Berlin hospitals carried her with the blue-prints to the German embassy. There, greatly shocked, they first wrote down her name and address, and then, indignant at her proposition, ordered her out. But the day following a strange young German who was not at all indignant, but, on the contrary, quite charming, called upon Marie. For the blue-prints he offered her a very large sum, and that same hour with them and Marie departed for Berlin. Marie did not need the money. Nor did the argument that she was serving her country greatly impress her. It was rather that she loved intrigue. And so she became a spy.

Henri Ravignac, the man she had robbed of the blue-prints, was tried by court martial. The

charge was treason, but Charles Ravignac, his younger brother, promised to prove that the guilty one was the girl, and to that end obtained leave of absence and spent much time and money. At the trial he was able to show the record of Marie in Berlin and Monte Carlo; that she was the daughter of a German secret agent; that on the afternoon the prints disappeared Marie, with an agent of the German embassy, had left Paris for Berlin. In consequence of this the charge of selling military secrets was altered to one of "gross neglect," and Henri Ravignac was sentenced to two years in the military prison at Tours. But he was of an ancient and noble family, and when they came to take him from his cell in the Cherche-Midi, he was dead. Charles, his brother, disappeared. It was said he also had killed himself; that he had been appointed a military attaché in South America; that to revenge his brother he had entered the secret service; but whatever became of him no one knew. All that was certain was that, thanks to the act of Marie Gessler, on the rolls of the French army the ancient and noble name of Ravignac no longer appeared.

In her chosen profession Marie Gessler found nothing discreditable. Of herself her opinion was

not high, and her opinion of men was lower. For her smiles she had watched several sacrifice honor, duty, loyalty; and she held them and their kind in contempt. To lie, to cajole, to rob men of secrets they thought important, and of secrets the importance of which they did not even guess, was to her merely an intricate and exciting game.

She played it very well. So well that in the service her advance was rapid. On important missions she was sent to Russia, through the Balkans; even to the United States. There, with credentials as an army nurse, she inspected our military hospitals and unobtrusively asked many innocent questions.

When she begged to be allowed to work in her beloved Paris, "they" told her when war came "they" intended to plant her inside that city, and that, until then, the less Paris knew of her the better.

But just before the great war broke, to report on which way Italy might jump, she was sent to Rome, and it was not until September she was recalled. The telegram informed her that her Aunt Elizabeth was ill, and that at once she must return to Berlin. This, she learned from the code book wrapped under the cover of her thermos

bottle, meant that she was to report to the general commanding the German forces at Soissons.

From Italy she passed through Switzerland, and, after leaving Basle, on military trains was rushed north to Luxemburg, and then west to Laon. She was accompanied by her companion, Bertha, an elderly and respectable, even distinguished-looking female. In the secret service her number was 528. Their passes from the war office described them as nurses of the German Red Cross. Only the Intelligence Department knew their real mission. With her also, as her chauffeur, was a young Italian soldier of fortune, Paul Anfossi. He had served in the Belgian Congo, in the French Foreign Legion in Algiers, and spoke all the European languages. In Rome, where as a wireless operator he was serving a commercial company, in selling Marie copies of messages he had memorized, Marie had found him useful, and when war came she obtained for him, from the Wilhelmstrasse, the number 292. From Laon, in one of the automobiles of the General Staff, the three spies were driven first to Soissons, and then along the road to Meaux and Paris, to the village of Neufchelles. They arrived at midnight, and in a château of one of the champagne princes, found the colonel commanding the

Intelligence Bureau. He accepted their credentials, destroyed them, and replaced them with a *laisser-passer* signed by the mayor of Laon. That dignitary, the colonel explained, to citizens of Laon fleeing to Paris and the coast had issued many passes. But as now between Laon and Paris there were three German armies, the refugees had been turned back and their passes confiscated.

"From among them," said the officer, "we have selected one for you. It is issued to the wife of Count d'Aurillac, a captain of reserves, and her aunt, Madame Benet. It asks for those ladies and their chauffeur, Briand, a safe-conduct through the French military lines. If it gets you into Paris you will destroy it and assume another name. The Count d'Aurillac is now with his regiment in that city. If he learned of the presence there of his wife, he would seek her, and that would not be good for you. So, if you reach Paris, you will become a Belgian refugee. You are high-born and rich. Your château has been destroyed. But you have money. You will give liberally to the Red Cross. You will volunteer to nurse in the hospitals. With your sad story of ill treatment by us, with your high birth, and your knowledge of nursing, which you acquired, of course, only as an amateur, you should not find it diffi-

cult to join the Ladies of France, or the American Ambulance. What you learn from the wounded English and French officers and the French doctors you will send us through the usual channels."

"When do I start?" asked the woman.

"For a few days," explained the officer, "you remain in this château. You will keep us informed of what is going forward after we withdraw."

"Withdraw?" It was more of an exclamation than a question. Marie was too well trained to ask questions.

"We are taking up a new position," said the officer, "on the Aisne."

The woman, incredulous, stared.

"And we do not enter Paris?"

"*You* do," returned the officer. "That is all that concerns you. We will join you later—in the spring. Meanwhile, for the winter we intrench ourselves along the Aisne. In a chimney of this château we have set up a wireless outfit. We are leaving it intact. The chauffeur Briand—who, you must explain to the French, you brought with you from Laon, and who has been long in your service—will transmit whatever you discover. We wish especially to know of any movement toward our left. If they attack in front

from Soissons, we are prepared; but of any attempt to cross the Oise and take us in flank, you must warn us."

The officer rose and hung upon himself his field-glasses, map-cases, and side-arms.

"We leave you now," he said. "When the French arrive you will tell them your reason for halting at this château was that the owner, Monsieur Iverney, and his family are friends of your husband. You found us here, and we detained you. And so long as you can use the wireless, make excuses to remain. If they offer to send you on to Paris, tell them your aunt is too ill to travel."

"But they will find the wireless," said the woman. "They are sure to use the towers for observation, and they will find it."

"In that case," said the officer, "you will suggest to them that we fled in such haste we had no time to dismantle it. Of course, you had no knowledge that it existed, or, as a loyal French woman, you would have at once told them." To emphasize his next words the officer pointed at her: "Under no circumstances," he continued, "must you be suspected. If they should take Briand in the act, should they have even the least doubt concerning him, you must repudiate him

entirely. If necessary, to keep your own skirts clear, it would be your duty yourself to denounce him as a spy."

"Your first orders," said the woman, "were to tell them Briand had been long in my service; that I brought him from my home in Laon."

"He might be in your service for years," returned the colonel, "and you not know he was a German agent."

"If to save myself I inform upon him," said Marie, "of course you know you will lose him."

The officer shrugged his shoulders. "A wireless operator," he retorted, "we can replace. But for you, and for the service you are to render in Paris, we have no substitute. *You* must not be found out. You are invaluable."

The spy inclined her head. "I thank you," she said.

The officer sputtered indignantly.

"It is not a compliment," he exclaimed; "it is an order. You must not be found out!"

Withdrawn some two hundred yards from the Paris road, the château stood upon a wooded hill. Except directly in front, trees of great height surrounded it. The tips of their branches brushed the windows; interlacing, they continued until they overhung the wall of the estate. Where it

ran with the road the wall gave way to a lofty gate and iron fence, through which those passing could see a stretch of noble turf, as wide as a polo-field, borders of flowers disappearing under the shadows of the trees; and the château itself, with its terrace, its many windows, its high-pitched, sloping roof, broken by towers and turrets.

Through the remainder of the night there came from the road to those in the château the roar and rumbling of the army in retreat. It moved without panic, disorder, or haste, but unceasingly. Not for an instant was there a breathing-spell. And when the sun rose, the three spies—the two women and the chauffeur—who in the great château were now alone, could see as well as hear the gray column of steel rolling past below them.

The spies knew that the gray column had reached Claye, had stood within fifteen miles of Paris, and then upon Paris had turned its back. They knew also that the reverberations from the direction of Meaux, that each moment grew more loud and savage, were the French "seventy-fives" whipping the gray column forward. Of what they felt the Germans did not speak. In silence they looked at each other, and in the eyes of Marie was bitterness and resolve.

Toward noon Marie met Anfossi in the great drawing-room that stretched the length of the terrace and from the windows of which, through the park gates, they could see the Paris road.

"This, that is passing now," said Marie, "is the last of our rear-guard. Go to your tower," she ordered, "and send word that except for stragglers and the wounded our column has just passed through Neufchelles, and that any moment we expect the French." She raised her hand impressively. "From now," she warned, "we speak French, we think French, we *are* French!"

Anfossi, or Briand, as now he called himself, addressed her in that language. His tone was bitter. "Pardon my lese-majesty," he said, "but this chief of your Intelligence Department is a *dummer Mensch.* He is throwing away a valuable life."

Marie exclaimed in dismay. She placed her hand upon his arm, and the violet eyes filled with concern.

"Not yours!" she protested.

"Absolutely!" returned the Italian. "I can send nothing by this knapsack wireless that they will not learn from others; from airmen, Uhlans, the peasants in the fields. And certainly I will be caught. Dead I am dead, but alive and in Paris the opportunities are unending. From the

French Legion Etranger I have my honorable discharge. I am an expert wireless operator and in their Signal Corps I can easily find a place. Imagine me, then, on the Eiffel Tower. From the air I snatch news from all of France, from the Channel, the North Sea. You and I could work together, as in Rome. But here, between the lines, with a pass from a village *sous préfet*, it is ridiculous. I am not afraid to die. But to die because some one else is stupid, that is hard."

Marie clasped his hand in both of hers.

"You must not speak of death," she cried; "you know I must carry out my orders, that I must force you to take this risk. And you know that thought of harm to you tortures me!"

Quickly the young man disengaged his hand. The woman exclaimed with anger.

"Why do you doubt me?" she cried.

Briand protested vehemently.

"I do not doubt you."

"My affection, then?" In a whisper that carried with it the feeling of a caress Marie added softly: "My love?"

The young man protested miserably. "You make it very hard, mademoiselle," he cried. "You are my superior officer, I am your servant. Who am I that I should share with others——"

The woman interrupted eagerly.

"Ah, you are jealous!" she cried. "Is that why you are so cruel? But when I *tell* you I love you, and only you, can you not *feel* it is the truth?"

The young man frowned unhappily.

"My duty, mademoiselle!" he stammered.

With an exclamation of anger Marie left him. As the door slammed behind her, the young man drew a deep breath. On his face was the expression of ineffable relief.

In the hall Marie met her elderly companion, Bertha, now her aunt, Madame Benet.

"I heard you quarrelling," Bertha protested. "It is most indiscreet. It is not in the part of the Countess d'Aurillac that she makes love to her chauffeur."

Marie laughed noiselessly and drew her farther down the hall. "He is imbecile!" she exclaimed. "He will kill me with his solemn face and his conceit. I make love to him—yes—that he may work the more willingly. But he will have none of it. He is jealous of the others."

Madame Benet frowned.

"He resents the others," she corrected. "I do not blame him. He is a gentleman!"

"And the others," demanded Marie; "were they not of the most noble families of Rome?"

"I am old and I am ugly," said Bertha, "but to me Anfossi is always as considerate as he is to you who are so beautiful."

"An Italian gentleman," returned Marie, "does not serve in Belgian Congo unless it is the choice of that or the marble quarries."

"I do not know what his past may be," sighed Madame Benet, "nor do I ask. He is only a number, as you and I are only numbers. And I beg you to let us work in harmony. At such a time your love-affairs threaten our safety. You must wait."

Marie laughed insolently. "With the Du Barry," she protested, "I can boast that I wait for no man."

"No," replied the older woman; "you pursue him!"

Marie would have answered sharply, but on the instant her interest was diverted. For one week, by day and night, she had lived in a world peopled only by German soldiers. Beside her in the railroad carriage, on the station platforms, at the windows of the trains that passed the one in which she rode, at the grade crossings, on the bridges, in the roads that paralleled the tracks, choking the streets of the villages and spread over the fields of grain, she had seen only the gray-green uniforms.

Even her professional eye no longer distinguished regiment from regiment, dragoon from grenadier, Uhlan from Hussar or Landsturm. Stripes, insignia, numerals, badges of rank, had lost their meaning. Those who wore them no longer were individuals. They were not even human. During the three last days the automobile, like a motorboat fighting the tide, had crept through a gray-green river of men, stained, as though from the banks, by mud and yellow clay. And for hours, while the car was blocked, and in fury the engine raced and purred, the gray-green river had rolled past her, slowly but as inevitably as lava down the slope of a volcano, bearing on its surface faces with staring eyes, thousands and thousands of eyes, some fierce and bloodshot, others filled with weariness, homesickness, pain. At night she still saw them: the white faces under the sweat and dust, the eyes dumb, inarticulate, asking the answer. She had been suffocated by German soldiers, by the mass of them, engulfed and smothered; she had stifled in a land inhabited only by gray-green ghosts.

And suddenly, as though a miracle had been wrought, she saw upon the lawn, riding toward her, a man in scarlet, blue, and silver. One man riding alone.

Approaching with confidence, but alert; his reins fallen, his hands nursing his carbine, his eyes searched the shadows of the trees, the empty windows, even the sun-swept sky. His was the new face at the door, the new step on the floor. And the spy knew had she beheld an army corps it would have been no more significant, no more menacing, than the solitary *chasseur à cheval* scouting in advance of the enemy.

"We are saved!" exclaimed Marie, with irony. "Go quickly," she commanded, "to the bedroom on the second floor that opens upon the staircase, so that you can see all who pass. You are too ill to travel. They must find you in bed."

"And you?" said Bertha.

"I," cried Marie rapturously, "hasten to welcome our preserver!"

The preserver was a peasant lad. Under the white dust his cheeks were burned a brown-red, his eyes, honest and blue, through much staring at the skies and at horizon lines, were puckered and encircled with tiny wrinkles. Responsibility had made him older than his years, and in speech brief. With the beautiful lady who with tears of joy ran to greet him, and who in an ecstasy of happiness pressed her cheek against the nose of his horse, he was unimpressed. He returned to

her her papers and gravely echoed her answers to his questions. "This château," he repeated, "was occupied by their General Staff; they have left no wounded here; you saw the last of them pass a half-hour since." He gathered up his reins.

Marie shrieked in alarm. "You will not leave us?" she cried.

For the first time the young man permitted himself to smile. "Others arrive soon," he said.

He touched his shako, wheeled his horse in the direction from which he had come, and a minute later Marie heard the hoofs echoing through the empty village.

When they came, the others were more sympathetic. Even in times of war a beautiful woman is still a beautiful woman. And the staff officers who moved into the quarters so lately occupied by the enemy found in the presence of the Countess d'Aurillac nothing to distress them. In the absence of her dear friend, Madame Iverney, the châtelaine of the château, she acted as their hostess. Her chauffeur showed the company cooks the way to the kitchen, the larder, and the charcoal-box. She, herself, in the hands of General Andre placed the keys of the famous wine-cellar, and to the surgeon, that the wounded might be

freshly bandaged, intrusted those of the linen-closet. After the indignities she had suffered while "detained" by *les Boches*, her delight and relief at again finding herself under the protection of her own people would have touched a heart of stone. And the hearts of the staff were not of stone. It was with regret they gave the countess permission to continue on her way. At this she exclaimed with gratitude. She assured them, were her aunt able to travel, she would immediately depart.

"In Paris she will be more comfortable than here," said the kind surgeon. He was a reservist, and in times of peace a fashionable physician and as much at his ease in a boudoir as in a field hospital. "Perhaps if I saw Madame Benet?"

At the suggestion the countess was overjoyed. But they found Madame Benet in a state of complete collapse. The conduct of the Germans had brought about a nervous breakdown.

"Though the bridges are destroyed at Meaux," urged the surgeon, "even with a detour, you can be in Paris in four hours. I think it is worth the effort."

But the mere thought of the journey threw Madame Benet into hysterics. She asked only to rest, she begged for an opiate to make her sleep.

She begged also that they would leave the door open, so that when she dreamed she was still in the hands of the Germans, and woke in terror, the sound of the dear French voices and the sight of the beloved French uniforms might reassure her. She played her part well. Concerning her Marie felt not the least anxiety. But toward Briand, the chauffeur, the new arrivals were less easily satisfied.

The general sent his adjutant for the countess. When the adjutant had closed the door General Andre began abruptly:

"The chauffeur Briand," he asked, "you know him; you can vouch for him?"

"But, certainly!" protested Marie. "He is an Italian."

As though with sudden enlightenment, Marie laughed. It was as if now in the suspicion of the officer she saw a certain reasonableness. "Briand was so long in the Foreign Legion in Algiers," she explained, "where my husband found him, that we have come to think of him as French. As much French as ourselves, I assure you."

The general and his adjutant were regarding each other questioningly.

"Perhaps I should tell the countess," began the general, "that we have learned——"

The signal from the adjutant was so slight, so swift, that Marie barely intercepted it.

The lips of the general shut together like the leaves of a book. To show the interview was at an end, he reached for a pen.

"I thank you," he said.

"Of course," prompted the adjutant, "Madame d'Aurillac understands the man must not know we inquired concerning him."

General Andre frowned at Marie.

"Certainly not!" he commanded. "The honest fellow must not know that even for a moment he was doubted."

Marie raised the violet eyes reprovingly.

"I trust," she said with reproach, "I too well understand the feelings of a French soldier to let him know his loyalty is questioned."

With a murmur of appreciation the officers bowed and with a gesture of gracious pardon Marie left them.

Outside in the hall, with none but orderlies to observe, like a cloak the graciousness fell from her. She was drawn two ways. In her work Anfossi was valuable. But Anfossi suspected was less than of no value; he became a menace, a death-warrant.

General Andre had said, "We have learned—"

and the adjutant had halted him. What had he learned? To know that, Marie would have given much. Still, one important fact comforted her. Anfossi alone was suspected. Had there been concerning herself the slightest doubt, they certainly would not have allowed her to guess her companion was under surveillance; they would not have asked one who was herself suspected to vouch for the innocence of a fellow conspirator. Marie found the course to follow difficult. With Anfossi under suspicion his usefulness was for the moment at an end; and to accept the chance offered her to continue on to Paris seemed most wise. On the other hand, if, concerning Anfossi, she had succeeded in allaying their doubts, the results most to be desired could be attained only by remaining where they were.

Their position inside the lines was of the greatest strategic value. The rooms of the servants were under the roof, and that Briand should sleep in one of them was natural. That to reach or leave his room he should constantly be ascending or descending the stairs also was natural. The field-wireless outfit, or, as he had disdainfully described it, the "knapsack" wireless, was situated not in the bedroom he had selected for himself, but in one adjoining. At other times

this was occupied by the maid of Madame Iverney. To summon her maid Madame Iverney, from her apartment on the second floor, had but to press a button. And it was in the apartment of Madame Iverney, and on the bed of that lady, that Madame Benet now reclined. When through the open door she saw an officer or soldier mount the stairs, she pressed the button that rang a bell in the room of the maid. In this way, long before whoever was ascending the stairs could reach the top floor, warning of his approach came to Anfossi. It gave him time to replace the dust-board over the fireplace in which the wireless was concealed and to escape into his own bedroom. The arrangement was ideal. And already information picked up in the halls below by Marie had been conveyed to Anfossi to relay in a French cipher to the German General Staff at Rheims.

Marie made an alert and charming hostess. To all who saw her it was evident that her mind was intent only upon the comfort of her guests. Throughout the day many came and went, but each she made welcome; to each as he departed she called "*bonne chance.*" Efficient, tireless, tactful, she was everywhere: in the dining-room, in the kitchen, in the bedrooms, for the wounded finding mattresses to spread in the gorgeous

salons of the champagne prince; for the soldier-chauffeurs carrying wine into the courtyard, where the automobiles panted and growled, and the arriving and departing shrieked for right of way. At all times an alluring person, now the one woman in a tumult of men, her smart frock covered by an apron, her head and arms bare, undismayed by the sight of the wounded or by the distant rumble of the guns, the Countess d'Aurillac was an inspiring and beautiful picture. The eyes of the officers, young and old, informed her of that fact, one of which already she was well aware. By the morning of the next day she was accepted as the owner of the château. And though continually she reminded the staff she was present only as the friend of her schoolmate, Madame Iverney, they deferred to her as to a hostess. Many of them she already saluted by name, and to those who with messages were constantly motoring to and from the front at Soissons she was particularly kind. Overnight the legend of her charm, of her devotion to the soldiers of all ranks, had spread from Soissons to Meaux, and from Meaux to Paris. It was noon of that day when from the window of the second story Marie saw an armored automobile sweep into the courtyard. It was driven by an officer, young and

appallingly good-looking, and, as was obvious by the way he spun his car, one who held in contempt both the law of gravity and death. That he was some one of importance seemed evident. Before he could alight the adjutant had raced to meet him. With her eye for detail Marie observed that the young officer, instead of imparting information, received it. He must, she guessed, have just arrived from Paris, and his brother officer either was telling him the news or giving him his orders. Whichever it might be, in what was told him the new arrival was greatly interested. One instant in indignation his gauntleted fist beat upon the steering-wheel, the next he smiled with pleasure. To interpret this pantomime was difficult; and, the better to inform herself, Marie descended the stairs.

As she reached the lower hall the two officers entered. To the spy the man last to arrive was always the one of greatest importance; and Marie assured herself that through her friend, the adjutant, to meet with this one would prove easy.

But the chauffeur commander of the armored car made it most difficult. At sight of Marie, much to her alarm, as though greeting a dear friend, he snatched his kepi from his head and sprang toward her.

"The major," he cried, "told me you were here, that you are Madame d'Aurillac." His eyes spoke his admiration. In delight he beamed upon her. "I might have known it!" he murmured. With the confidence of one who is sure he brings good news, he laughed happily. "And I," he cried, "am 'Pierrot'!"

Who the devil "Pierrot" might be the spy could not guess. She knew only that she wished by a German shell "Pierrot" and his car had been blown to tiny fragments. Was it a trap, she asked herself, or was the handsome youth really some one the Countess d'Aurillac should know. But, as from his introducing himself it was evident he could not know that lady very well, Marie took courage and smiled.

"*Which* 'Pierrot'?" she parried.

"Pierre Thierry!" cried the youth.

To the relief of Marie he turned upon the adjutant and to him explained who Pierre Thierry might be.

"Paul d'Aurillac," he said, "is my dearest friend. When he married this charming lady I was stationed in Algiers, and but for the war I might never have met her."

To Marie, with his hand on his heart in a most charming manner, he bowed. His admiration he made no effort to conceal.

"And so," he said, "I know why there is war!"

The adjutant smiled indulgently, and departed on his duties, leaving them alone. The handsome eyes of Captain Thierry were raised to the violet eyes of Marie. They appraised her boldly and as boldly expressed their approval.

In burlesque the young man exclaimed indignantly: "Paul deceived me!" he cried. "He told me he had married the most beautiful woman in Laon. He has married the most beautiful woman in France!"

To Marie this was not impertinence, but gallantry.

This was a language she understood, and this was the type of man, because he was the least difficult to manage, she held most in contempt.

"But about you, Paul did not deceive me," she retorted. In apparent confusion her eyes refused to meet his. "He told me 'Pierrot' was a most dangerous man!"

She continued hurriedly. With wifely solicitude she asked concerning Paul. She explained that for a week she had been a prisoner in the château, and, since the mobilization, of her husband save that he was with his regiment in Paris she had heard nothing. Captain Thierry was able to give her later news. Only the day previous, on

the boulevards, he had met Count d'Aurillac. He was at the Grand Hôtel, and as Thierry was at once motoring back to Paris he would give Paul news of their meeting. He hoped he might tell him that soon his wife also would be in Paris. Marie explained that only the illness of her aunt prevented her from that same day joining her husband. Her manner became serious.

"And what other news have you?" she asked. "Here on the firing-line we know less of what is going forward than you in Paris."

So Pierre Thierry told her all he knew. They were preparing despatches he was at once to carry back to the General Staff, and, for the moment, his time was his own. How could he better employ it than in talking of the war with a patriotic and charming French woman?

In consequence Marie acquired a mass of facts, gossip, and guesses. From these she mentally selected such information as, to her employers across the Aisne, would be of vital interest.

And to rid herself of Thierry and on the fourth floor seek Anfossi was now her only wish. But, in attempting this, by the return of the adjutant she was delayed. To Thierry the adjutant gave a sealed envelope.

"Thirty-one, Boulevard des Invalides," he said.

With a smile he turned to Marie. "And you will accompany him!"

"I!" exclaimed Marie. She was sick with sudden terror.

But the tolerant smile of the adjutant reassured her.

"The count, your husband," he explained, "has learned of your detention here by the enemy, and he has besieged the General Staff to have you convoyed safely to Paris." The adjutant glanced at a field telegram he held open in his hand. "He asks," he continued, "that you be permitted to return in the car of his friend, Captain Thierry, and that on arriving you join him at the Grand Hôtel."

Thierry exclaimed with delight.

"But how charming!" he cried. "To-night you must both dine with me at La Rue's." He saluted his superior officer. "Some petrol, sir," he said. "And I am ready." To Marie he added: "The car will be at the steps in five minutes." He turned and left them.

The thoughts of Marie, snatching at an excuse for delay, raced madly. The danger of meeting the Count d'Aurillac, her supposed husband, did not alarm her. The Grand Hôtel has many exits, and, even before they reached it, for leaving the

car she could invent an excuse that the gallant Thierry would not suspect. But what now concerned her was how, before she was whisked away to Paris, she could convey to Anfossi the information she had gathered from Thierry. First, of a woman overcome with delight at being reunited with her husband she gave an excellent imitation; then she exclaimed in distress: "But my aunt, Madame Benet!" she cried. "I cannot leave her!"

"The Sisters of St. Francis," said the adjutant, "arrive within an hour to nurse the wounded. They will care also for your aunt."

Marie concealed her chagrin. "Then I will at once prepare to go," she said.

The adjutant handed her a slip of paper. "Your *laisser-passer* to Paris," he said. "You leave in five minutes, madame!"

As temporary hostess of the château Marie was free to visit any part of it, and as she passed her door a signal from Madame Benet told her that Anfossi was on the fourth floor, that he was at work, and that the coast was clear. Softly, in the felt slippers she always wore, as she explained, in order not to disturb the wounded, she mounted the staircase. In her hand she carried the housekeeper's keys, and as an excuse it was her plan to

return with an armful of linen for the arriving Sisters. But Marie never reached the top of the stairs. When her eyes rose to the level of the fourth floor she came to a sudden halt. At what she saw terror gripped her, bound her hand and foot, and turned her blood to ice.

At her post for an instant Madame Benet had slept, and an officer of the staff, led by curiosity, chance, or suspicion, had, unobserved and unannounced, mounted to the fourth floor. When Marie saw him he was in front of the room that held the wireless. His back was toward her, but she saw that he was holding the door to the room ajar, that his eye was pressed to the opening, and that through it he had pushed the muzzle of his automatic. What would be the fate of Anfossi Marie knew. Nor did she for an instant consider it. Her thoughts were of her own safety; that she might live. Not that she might still serve the Wilhelmstrasse, the Kaiser, or the Fatherland; but that she might live. In a moment Anfossi would be denounced, the château would ring with the alarm, and, though she knew Anfossi would not betray her, by others she might be accused. To avert suspicion from herself she saw only one way open. She must be the first to denounce Anfossi.

Like a deer she leaped down the marble stairs and, in a panic she had no need to assume, burst into the presence of the staff.

"Gentlemen!" she gasped, "my servant—the chauffeur—Briand is a spy! There is a German wireless in the château. He is using it! I have seen him." With exclamations, the officers rose to their feet. General Andre alone remained seated. General Andre was a veteran of many Colonial wars: Cochin-China, Algiers, Morocco. The great war, when it came, found him on duty in the Intelligence Department. His aquiline nose, bristling white eyebrows, and flashing, restless eyes gave him his nickname of *l'Aigle*.

In amazement, the flashing eyes were now turned upon Marie. He glared at her as though he thought she suddenly had flown mad.

"A German wireless!" he protested. "It is impossible!"

"I was on the fourth floor," panted Marie, "collecting linen for the Sisters. In the room next to the linen closet I heard a strange buzzing sound. I opened the door softly. I saw Briand with his back to me seated by an instrument. There were receivers clamped to his ears! My God! The disgrace. The disgrace to my husband and to me, who vouched for him to you!" Apparently

in an agony of remorse, the fingers of the woman laced and interlaced. "I cannot forgive myself!"

The officers moved toward the door, but General Andre halted them. Still in a tone of incredulity, he demanded: "When did you see this?"

Marie knew the question was coming, knew she must explain how she saw Briand, and yet did not see the staff officer who, with his prisoner, might now at any instant appear. She must make it plain she had discovered the spy and left the upper part of the house before the officer had visited it. When that was she could not know, but the chance was that he had preceded her by only a few minutes.

"When did you see this?" repeated the general.

"But just now," cried Marie; "not ten minutes since."

"Why did you not come to me at once?"

"I was afraid," replied Marie. "If I moved I was afraid he might hear me, and he, knowing I would expose him, would kill me—and so *escape you!*" There was an eager whisper of approval. For silence, General Andre slapped his hand upon the table.

"Then," continued Marie, "I understood with the receivers on his ears he could not have heard

me open the door, nor could he hear me leave, and I ran to my aunt. The thought that we had harbored such an animal sickened me, and I was weak enough to feel faint. But only for an instant. Then I came here." She moved swiftly to the door. "Let me show you the room," she begged; "you can take him in the act." Her eyes, wild with the excitement of the chase, swept the circle. "Will you come?" she begged.

Unconscious of the crisis he interrupted, the orderly on duty opened the door.

"Captain Thierry's compliments," he recited mechanically, "and is he to delay longer for Madame d'Aurillac?"

With a sharp gesture General Andre waved Marie toward the door. Without rising, he inclined his head. "Adieu, madame," he said. "We act at once upon your information. I thank you!"

As she crossed from the hall to the terrace, the ears of the spy were assaulted by a sudden tumult of voices. They were raised in threats and curses. Looking back, she saw Anfossi descending the stairs. His hands were held above his head; behind him, with his automatic, the staff officer she had surprised on the fourth floor was driving him forward. Above the clenched fists

of the soldiers that ran to meet him, the eyes of Anfossi were turned toward her. His face was expressionless. His eyes neither accused nor reproached. And with the joy of one who has looked upon and then escaped the guillotine, Marie ran down the steps to the waiting automobile. With a pretty cry of pleasure she leaped into the seat beside Thierry. Gayly she threw out her arms. "To Paris!" she commanded. The handsome eyes of Thierry, eloquent with admiration, looked back into hers. He stooped, threw in the clutch, and the great gray car, with the machine gun and its crew of privates guarding the rear, plunged through the park.

"To Paris!" echoed Thierry.

In the order in which Marie had last seen them, Anfossi and the staff officer entered the room of General Andre, and upon the soldiers in the hall the door was shut. The face of the staff officer was grave, but his voice could not conceal his elation.

"My general," he reported, "I found this man in the act of giving information to the enemy. There is a wireless——"

General Andre rose slowly. He looked neither at the officer nor at his prisoner. With frowning eyes he stared down at the maps upon his table.

"I know," he interrupted. "Some one has already told me." He paused, and then, as though recalling his manners, but still without raising his eyes, he added: "You have done well, sir."

In silence the officers of the staff stood motionless. With surprise they noted that, as yet, neither in anger nor curiosity had General Andre glanced at the prisoner. But of the presence of the general the spy was most acutely conscious. He stood erect, his arms still raised, but his body strained forward, and on the averted eyes of the general his own were fixed.

In an agony of supplication they asked a question.

At last, as though against his wish, toward the spy the general turned his head, and their eyes met. And still General Andre was silent. Then the arms of the spy, like those of a runner who has finished his race and breasts the tape exhausted, fell to his sides. In a voice low and vibrant he spoke his question.

"It has been so long, sir," he pleaded. "May I not come home?"

General Andre turned to the astonished group surrounding him. His voice was hushed like that of one who speaks across an open grave.

"Gentlemen," he began, "my children," he

added. "A German spy, a woman, involved in a scandal your brother in arms, Henri Ravignac. His honor, he thought, was concerned, and without honor he refused to live. To prove him guiltless his younger brother Charles asked leave to seek out the woman who had betrayed Henri, and by us was detailed on secret service. He gave up home, family, friends. He lived in exile, in poverty, at all times in danger of a swift and ignoble death. In the War Office we know him as one who has given to his country services she cannot hope to reward. For she cannot return to him the years he has lost. She cannot return to him his brother. But she can and will clear the name of Henri Ravignac, and upon his brother Charles bestow promotion and honors."

The general turned and embraced the spy. "My children," he said, "welcome your brother. He has come home."

Before the car had reached the fortifications, Marie Gessler had arranged her plan of escape. She had departed from the château without even a hand-bag, and she would say that before the shops closed she must make purchases.

Le Printemps lay in their way, and she asked that, when they reached it, for a moment she might alight. Captain Thierry readily gave permission.

From the department store it would be most easy to disappear, and in anticipation Marie smiled covertly. Nor was the picture of Captain Thierry impatiently waiting outside unamusing.

But before Le Printemps was approached, the car turned sharply down a narrow street. On one side, along its entire length, ran a high gray wall, grim and forbidding. In it was a green gate studded with iron bolts. Before this the automobile drew suddenly to a halt. The crew of the armored car tumbled off the rear seat, and one of them beat upon the green gate. Marie felt a hand of ice clutch at her throat. But she controlled herself.

"And what is this?" she cried gayly.

At her side Captain Thierry was smiling down at her, but his smile was hateful.

"It is the prison of St. Lazare," he said. "It is not becoming," he added sternly, "that the name of the Countess d'Aurillac should be made common as the Paris road!"

Fighting for her life, Marie thrust herself against him; her arm that throughout the journey had rested on the back of the driving-seat caressed his shoulders; her lips and the violet eyes were close to his.

"Why should you care?" she whispered fiercely.

"You have *me!* Let the Count d'Aurillac look after the honor of his wife himself."

The charming Thierry laughed at her mockingly.

"He means to," he said. "I *am* the Count d'Aurillac!"

PLAYING DEAD

PLAYING DEAD

TO Fate, "Jimmie" Blagwin had signalled the "supreme gesture." He had accomplished the Great Adventure. He was dead.

And as he sat on his trunk in the tiny hall bedroom, and in the afternoon papers read of his suicide, his eyes were lit with pleasurable pride. Not at the nice things the obituaries told of his past, but because his act of self-sacrifice, so carefully considered, had been carried to success. As he read Jimmie smiled with self-congratulation. He felt glad he was alive; or, to express it differently, felt glad he was dead. And he hoped Jeanne, his late wife, now his widow, also would be glad. But not *too* glad. In return for relieving Jeanne of his presence he hoped she might at times remember him with kindness. Of her always would he think gratefully and tenderly. Nothing could end his love for Jeanne—not even this suicide.

As children, in winter in New York, in summer on Long Island, Jimmie Blagwin and Jeanne Thayer had grown up together. They had the same tastes in sports, the same friends, the same

worldly advantages. Neither of them had many ideas. It was after they married that Jeanne began to borrow ideas and doubt the advantages.

For the first three years after the wedding, in the old farmhouse which Jimmie had made over into a sort of idealized country club, Jeanne lived a happy, healthy, out-of-door existence. To occupy her there were Jimmie's hunters and a pack of joyous beagles; for tennis, at week-ends Jimmie filled the house with men, and during the week they both played polo, he with the Meadow Brooks and she with the Meadow Larks, and the golf links of Piping Rock ran almost to their lodge-gate. Until Proctor Maddox took a cottage at Glen Cove and joined the golf-club, than Jeanne and Jimmie on all Long Island no couple were so content.

At that time Proctor Maddox was the young and brilliant editor of the *Wilderness* magazine, the wilderness being the world we live in, and the Voice crying in it the voice of Proctor Maddox. He was a Socialist and Feminist, he flirted with syndicalism, and he had a good word even for the I. W. W. He was darkly handsome, his eyeglasses were fastened to a black ribbon, and he addressed his hostess as "dear lady." He was that sort. Women described him as "dangerous,"

and liked him because he talked of things they did not understand, and because he told each of them it was easy to see it would be useless to flatter *her*. The men did not like him. The oldest and wealthiest members of the club protested that the things Maddox said in his magazine should exclude him from the society of law-abiding, money-making millionaires. But Freddy Bayliss, the leader of the younger crowd, said that, to him, it did not matter what Maddox said in the *Wilderness*, so long as he stayed there. It was Bayliss who christened him "the Voice."

Until the Voice came to Glen Cove all that troubled Jeanne was that her pony had sprained a tendon, and that in the mixed doubles her eye was off the ball. Proctor Maddox suggested other causes for discontent.

"What does it matter," he demanded, "whether you hit a rubber ball inside a whitewashed line, or not? That energy, that brain, that influence of yours over others, that something men call—charm, should be exerted to emancipate yourself and your unfortunate sisters."

"Emaciate myself," protested Jeanne eagerly; "do you mean I'm taking on flesh?"

"I said 'emancipate,'" corrected Maddox. "I mean to free yourself of the bonds that bind your

sex; for instance, the bonds of matrimony. It is obsolete, barbarous. It makes of women—slaves and chattels."

"But, since I married, I'm *much* freer," protested Jeanne. "Mother never let me play polo, or ride astride. But Jimmie lets me. He says cross saddle is safer."

"Jimmie *lets* you!" mocked the Voice. "*That* is exactly what I mean. Why should you go to him, or to any man, for permission? Are you his cook asking for an evening out? No! You are a free soul, and your duty is to keep your soul from bondage. There are others in the world besides your husband. What of your duty to them? Have you ever thought of them?"

"No, I have not," confessed Jeanne. "Who do you mean by 'them'? Shop-girls, and white slaves, and women who want to vote?"

"I mean the great army of the discontented," explained the Voice.

"And should I be discontented?" asked Jeanne. "Tell me why."

So, then and on many other occasions, Maddox told her why. It was one of the best things he did.

People say, when the triangle forms, the husband always is the last to see. But, if he loves

his wife, he is the first. And after three years of being married to Jeanne, and, before that, five years of wanting to marry Jeanne, Jimmie loved her devotedly, entirely, slavishly. It was the best thing *he* did. So, when to Jeanne the change came, her husband recognized it. What the cause was he could not fathom; he saw only that, in spite of her impatient denials, she was discontented, restless, unhappy. Thinking it might be that for too long they had gone "back to the land," he suggested they might repeat their honeymoon in Paris. The idea was received only with alarm. Concerning Jeanne, Jimmie decided secretly to consult a doctor. Meanwhile he bought her a new hunter.

The awakening came one night at a dance at the country club. That evening Jeanne was filled with unrest, and with Jimmie seemed particularly aggrieved. Whatever he said gave offense; even his eagerness to conciliate her was too obvious. With the other men who did not dance, Jimmie was standing in the doorway when, over the heads of those looking in from the veranda, he saw the white face and black eyes of Maddox. Jimmie knew Maddox did not dance, at those who danced had heard him jeer, and his presence caused him mild surprise. The editor, leaning forward, un-

conscious that he was conspicuous, searched the ballroom with his eyes. They were anxious, unsatisfied; they gave to his pale face the look of one who is famished. Then suddenly his face lit and he nodded eagerly. Following the direction of his eyes, Jimmie saw his wife, over the shoulder of her partner, smiling at Maddox. Her face was radiant; a great peace had descended upon it.

Jimmie knew just as surely as though Jeanne had told him. He walked out and sat down on the low wall of the terrace with his back to the club-house and his legs dangling. Below him in the moonlight lay the great basin of the golf links, the white rectangle of the polo fields with the gallows-like goals, and on a hill opposite, above the tree-tops, the chimneys of his house. He was down for a tennis match the next morning, and the sight of his home suggested to him only that he ought to be in bed and asleep.

Then he recognized that he never would sleep again. He went over it from the beginning, putting the pieces together. He never had liked Maddox, but he had explained that by the fact that, as Maddox was so much more intelligent than he, there could be little between them. And it was because every one said he was so intelligent that he had looked upon his devotion to

Jeanne rather as a compliment. He wondered why already it had not been plain to him. When Jeanne, who mocked at golf as a refuge for old age, spent hours with Maddox on the links; when, after she had declined to ride with her husband, on his return he would find her at tea with Maddox in front of the wood fire.

That night, when he drove Jeanne home, she still was joyous, radiant; it was now she who chided him upon being silent.

He waited until noon the next morning and then asked her if it were true. It was true. Jeanne thanked him for coming to her so honestly and straightforwardly. She also had been straightforward and honest. They had waited, she said, not through deceit but only out of consideration for him.

"Before we told you," Jeanne explained, "we wanted to be quite sure that *I* was sure."

The "we" hurt Jimmie like the stab of a rusty knife.

But he said only: "And you *are* sure? Three years ago you were sure you loved *me*."

Jeanne's eyes were filled with pity, but she said: "That was three years ago. I was a child, and now I am a woman. In many ways you have stood still and I have gone on."

"That's true," said Jimmie; "you always were too good for me."

"*No* woman is good enough for you," returned Jeanne loyally. "And your brains are just as good as mine, only you haven't used them. I have questioned and reached out and gained knowledge of all kinds. I am a Feminist and you are not. If you were you would understand."

"I don't know even what a Feminist is," said Jimmie, "but I'm glad I'm not one."

"A Feminist is one," explained Jeanne, "who does not think her life should be devoted to one person, but to the world."

Jimmie shook his head and smiled miserably.

"*You* are *my* world," he said. "The only world I know. The only world I want to know."

He walked to the fireplace and leaned his elbows on the mantel, and buried his head in his hands. But that his distress might not hurt Jeanne, he turned and, to give her courage, smiled.

"If you are going to devote yourself to the world," he asked, "and not to any one person, why can't I sort of trail along? Why need you leave me and go with—with some one else?"

"For the work I hope to do," answered Jeanne, "you and I are not suited. But Proctor and I

are suited. He says he never met a woman who understands him as I do."

"Hell!" said Jimmie. After that he did not speak for some time. Then he asked roughly:

"He's going to marry you, of course?"

Jeanne flushed crimson.

"Of course!" she retorted. Her blush looked like indignation, and so Jimmie construed it, but it was the blush of embarrassment. For Maddox considered the ceremony of marriage an ignoble and barbaric bond. It degraded the woman, he declared, in making her a slave, and the man in that he accepted such a sacrifice. Jeanne had not argued with him. Until she were free, to discuss it with him seemed indecent. But in her own mind there was no doubt. If she were to be the helpmate of Proctor Maddox in uplifting the world, she would be Mrs. Proctor Maddox; or, much as he was to her, each would uplift the world alone. But she did not see the necessity of explaining all this to Jimmie, so she said: "Of course!"

"I will see the lawyers to-morrow," said Jimmie. "It will take some time to arrange, and so," he added hopefully, "you can think it over."

Jeanne exclaimed miserably:

"I have thought of nothing else," she cried, "for six months!"

Jimmie bent above her and laid his hand upon her shoulder.

"I am sorry, so sorry," he said. "If I'd any brains I'd have seen how it was long ago. Now I'll not waste time. You'll be rid of me as quick as the courts can fix it."

He started for the door, but Jeanne caught his hand.

"Won't you kiss me, Jimmie?" she said.

Jimmie hesitated unhappily and Jeanne raised her eyes to his.

"Not since we were married, Jimmie," she said, "has any one kissed me but you."

So Jimmie bent and kissed her. She clung to his sleeve.

"Jimmie," she begged, "you haven't told me you forgive me. Unless you forgive me I can't go on with it. Tell me you forgive me!"

"Forgive you?" protested Jimmie. "I love you!"

When Jimmie went to the office of the lawyer, who also was his best friend, and told him that Jeanne wanted a separation, that young man kicked the waste-paper basket against the opposite wall.

"I'll not do it," he protested, "and I won't let you do it, either. Why should you smear your name and roll in the dirt and play dead to please Jeanne? If Jeanne thinks I'm going to send you to a Raines hotel and follow you up with detectives to furnish her with a fake divorce, you can tell her I won't. What are they coming to?" demanded the best friend. "What do they want? A man gives a woman all his love, all his thoughts, gives her his name, his home; only asks to work his brains out for her, only asks to see her happy. And she calls it 'charity,' calls herself a 'slave'!" The best friend kicked violently at the place where the waste-basket had been. "*Give* them the vote, I say," he shouted. "It's all they're good for!"

The violence of his friend did not impress Jimmie. As he walked up-town the only part of the interview he carried with him was that there must be no scandal. Not on his account. If Jeanne wished it, he assured himself, in spite of the lawyer, he was willing, in the metaphor of that gentleman, to "roll in the dirt and play dead." "Play dead!" The words struck him full in the face. Were he dead and out of the way, Jeanne, without a touch of scandal, could marry the man she loved. Jimmie halted in his tracks. He be-

lieved he saw the only possible exit. He turned into a side street, and between the silent houses, closed for the summer, worked out his plan. For long afterward that city block remained in his memory; the doctors' signs on the sills, the caretakers seeking the air, the chauffeurs at the cab rank. For hours they watched the passing and repassing of the young man, who with bent head and fixed eyes struck at the pavement with his stick.

That he should really kill himself Jimmie did not for a moment contemplate. To him self-destruction appeared only as an offense against nature. On his primitive, out-of-door, fox-hunting mind the ethics of suicide lay as uneasily as absinthe on the stomach of a baby. But, he argued, by *pretending* he were dead, he could set Jeanne free, could save her from gossip, and could still dream of her, love her, and occupy with her, if not the same continent, the same world.

He had three problems to solve, and as he considered them he devotedly wished he might consult with a brain more clever than his own. But an accomplice was out of the question. Were he to succeed, everybody must be fooled; no one could share his secret. It was "a lone game, played alone, and without my partner."

The three problems were: first, in order to protect his wife, to provide for the suicide a motive other than the attentions of Maddox; second, to make the suicide look like a real suicide; third, without later creating suspicion, to draw enough money from the bank to keep himself alive after he was dead. For his suicide Jeanne must not hold herself to blame; she must not believe her conduct forced his end; above every one else, she must be persuaded that in bringing about his death she was completely innocent. What reasons then were accepted for suicide?

As to this, Jimmie, refusing to consider the act justified for any reason, was somewhat at a loss. He had read of men who, owing to loss of honor, loss of fortune, loss of health, had "gone out." He was determined he owed it to himself not to go out under a cloud, and he could not lose his money, as then there would be none to leave Jeanne; so he must lose his health. As except for broken arms and collar-bones he never had known a sick-bed, this last was as difficult as the others, but it must serve. After much consideration he decided he would go blind. At least he would pretend he was going blind. To give a semblance of truth to this he would that day consult distinguished oculists and, in spite of their assur-

ances, would tell them that slowly and surely his eyesight was failing him. He would declare to them, in the dread of such a catastrophe, he was of a mind to seek self-destruction. To others he would confide the secret of his blindness and his resolution not to survive it. And, later, all of these would remember and testify.

The question of money also was difficult. After his death he no longer could sign a check or negotiate securities. He must have cash. But if from the bank he drew large sums of actual money, if he converted stocks and bonds into cash and a week later disappeared, apparently forever, questions as to what became of the sums he had collected would arise, and that his disappearance was genuine would be doubted. This difficulty made Jimmie for a moment wonder if being murdered for his money, and having his body concealed by the murderer, would not be better than suicide. It would, at least, explain the disappearance of the money. But he foresaw that for his murder some innocent one might be suspected and hanged. This suggested leaving behind him evidence to show that the one who murdered him was none other than Proctor Maddox. The idea appealed to his sense of humor and justice. It made the punishment fit the

crime. Not without reluctance did he abandon it and return to his plan of suicide. But he recognized that to supply himself with any large sum of money would lead to suspicion and that he must begin his new life almost empty-handed. In his new existence he must work.

For that day and until the next afternoon he remained in town, and in that time prepared the way for his final exit. At a respectable lodging-house on West Twenty-third Street, near the ferry, he gave his name as Henry Hull, and engaged a room. To this room, from a department store he never before had entered, he shipped a trunk and valise marked with his new initials and filled with clothes to suit his new estate. To supply himself with money, at banks, clubs, and restaurants he cashed many checks for small sums. The total of his collections, from places scattered over all the city, made quite a comfortable bank roll. And in his box at the safe-deposit vault he came upon a windfall. It was an emerald bracelet left him by an eccentric aunt who had lived and died in Paris. The bracelet he had offered to Jeanne, but she did not like it and had advised him to turn it into money and, as the aged relative had wished, spend it upon himself. That was three years since, and

now were it missing Jeanne would believe that at some time in the past he had followed her advice. So he carried the bracelet away with him. For a year it would keep a single man in comfort.

His next step was to acquaint himself with the nature of the affliction on account of which he was to destroy himself. At the public library he collected a half-dozen books treating of blindness, and selected his particular malady. He picked out glaucoma, and for his purpose it was admirably suited. For, so Jimmie discovered, in a case of glaucoma the oculist was completely at the mercy of the patient. Except to the patient the disease gave no sign. To an oculist a man might say, "Three nights ago my eyesight played me the following tricks," and from that the oculist would know the man was stricken with glaucoma; but the eyes would tell him nothing.

The next morning to four oculists Jimmie detailed his symptoms. Each looked grave, and all diagnosed his trouble as glaucoma.

"I knew it!" groaned Jimmie, and assured them sooner than go blind he would jump into the river. They pretended to treat this as an extravagance, but later, when each of them was interviewed, he remembered that Mr. Blagwin had threatened to drown himself. On his way to the train Jimmie

purchased a pair of glasses and, in order to invite questions, in the club car pretended to read with them. When his friends expressed surprise, Jimmie told them of the oculists he had consulted, and that they had informed him his case was hopeless. If this proved true, he threatened to drown himself.

On his return home he explained to Jeanne he had seen the lawyer, and that that gentleman suggested the less she knew of what was going on the better. In return Jeanne told him she had sent for Maddox and informed him that, until the divorce was secured, they had best not be seen together. The wisdom of this appealed even to Maddox, and already, to fill in what remained of the summer, he had departed for Bar Harbor. To Jimmie the relief of his absence was inexpressible. He had given himself only a week to live, and, for the few days still remaining to him, to be alone with Jeanne made him miserably happy. The next morning Jimmie confessed to his wife that his eyes were failing him. The trouble came, he explained, from a fall he had received the year before steeplechasing. He had not before spoken of it, as he did not wish to distress her. The oculists he had consulted gave him no hope. He would end it, he declared, in the gun-room.

Jeanne was thoroughly alarmed. That her old playmate, lover, husband should come to such a plight at the very time she had struck him the hardest blow of all filled her with remorse. In a hundred ways she tried to make up to him for the loss of herself and for the loss of his eyes. She became his constant companion; never had she been so kind and so considerate. They saw no one from the outside, and each day through the wood paths that circled their house made silent pilgrimages. And each day on a bench, placed high, where the view was fairest, together, and yet so far apart, watched the sun sink into the sound.

"These are the times I will remember," said Jimmie; "when—when I am alone."

The last night they sat on the bench he took out his knife and carved the date—July, 1913.

"What does that mean?" asked Jeanne.

"It means to-night I seem to love you more and need you more than ever before," said Jimmie. "That is what it means. Will you remember?"

Jeanne was looking away from him, but she stretched out her hand and laid it upon his.

"To-morrow I am going to town," said Jimmie, "to see that oculist from Paris. They say what he tells you is the last word. And, if he says——"

Jeanne swung toward him and with all the jeal-

ousy of possession held his hand. Her own eyes were blurred with tears.

"He will tell you the others are wrong!" she cried. "I know he will. He must! You—who have always been so kind! God could not be so cruel!"

Jimmie stopped her.

"If I am not to see *you*——"

During his last week at home Jimmie had invented a Doctor Picard, a distinguished French oculist, who, on a tour of the world, was by the rarest chance at that moment in New York. According to Jimmie, all the other oculists had insisted he must consult Picard, and might consider what Picard said as final. Picard was staying with a friend—Jimmie did not say where—and after receiving Jimmie was at once taking the train for San Francisco. As Jimmie had arranged his scenario, it was Picard who was to deal him his death sentence.

Her husband seemed so entirely to depend on what Picard might say that Jeanne decided, should the verdict be unfavorable, she had best be at his side. But, as this would have upset Jimmie's plan, he argued against it. Should the news be bad, he pointed out, for her to receive it in her own home would be much easier for both. Jeanne felt she had been rebuffed, but that, if

Jimmie did not want her with him, she no longer was in a position to insist.

So she contented herself with driving him to the train and, before those who knew them at the station, kissing him good-by.

Afterward, that she had done so comforted her greatly.

"I'll be praying for you, Jimmie," she whispered. "And, as soon as you know, you'll——"

So upset was Jimmie by the kiss, and by the knowledge that he was saying farewell for the last time, that he nearly exposed his purpose.

"I want the last thing I say to you," he stammered, "to be this: that whatever you do will be right. I love you so that I will understand."

When he arrived in New York, in his own name, he booked a stateroom on the *Ceramic*. She was listed to sail that evening after midnight. It was because she departed at that hour that for a week Jimmie had fixed upon her as furnishing the scene of his exit. During the day he told several of his friends that the report of the great oculist had been against him. Later, they recalled that he talked wildly, that he was deeply despondent. In the afternoon he sent a telegram to Jeanne:

"Verdict unfavorable. Will remain to-night in town. All love. J."

At midnight he went on board. The decks and saloons were swarming and noisy with seagoers, many of whom had come to the ship directly from the theatres and restaurants, the women bare-headed, in evening gowns. Jimmie felt grateful to them. They gave to the moment of his taking off an air of gentle gayety. Among those who were sailing, and those who had come to wish them "bon voyage," many were known to Jimmie. He told them he was going abroad at the command of his oculist. Also, he forced himself upon the notice of officers and stewards, giving them his name, and making inquiries concerning the non-appearance of fictitious baggage. Later, they also recalled the young man in dinner jacket and golf cap who had lost a dressing-case marked "James Blagwin."

In his cabin Jimmie wrote two letters. The one to the captain of the ship read:

"After we pass Fire Island I am going overboard. Do not make any effort to find me, as it will be useless. I am sorry to put you to this trouble."

The second letter was to Jeanne. It read:

"Picard agreed with the others. My case is hopeless. I am ending all to-night. Forgive me. I leave you all the love in all the world. Jimmie."

When he had addressed these letters he rang for the steward.

"I am not going to wait until we leave the dock," he said. "I am turning in now. I am very tired, and I don't want you to wake me on any excuse whatsoever until to-morrow at noon. Better still, don't come until I ring!"

When the steward had left him, Jimmie pinned the two letters upon the pillow, changed the steamer-cap for an Alpine hat, and beneath a rain-coat concealed his evening clothes. He had purposely selected the deck cabin farthest aft. Accordingly, when after making the cabin dark he slipped from it, the break in the deck that separated the first from the second class passengers was but a step distant. The going-ashore bugles had sounded, and more tumult than would have followed had the ship struck a rock now spread to every deck. With sharp commands officers were speeding the parting guests; the parting guests were shouting passionate good-bys and sending messages to Aunt Maria; quartermasters howled hoarse warnings, donkey-engines panted under the weight of belated luggage, fall and tackle groaned and strained. And the ship's siren, enraged at the delay, protested in one long-drawn-out, inarticulate shriek.

Jimmie slipped down the accommodation ladder that led to the well-deck, side-stepped a yawning hatch, dodged a swinging cargo net stuffed with trunks, and entered the second-class smoking-room. From there he elbowed his way to the second-class promenade deck. A stream of tearful and hilarious visitors who, like sheep in a chute, were being herded down the gangway, engulfed him. Unresisting, Jimmie let himself, by weight of numbers, be carried forward.

A moment later he was shot back to the dock and to the country from which at that moment, in deck cabin A 4, he was supposed to be drawing steadily away.

Dodging the electric lights, on foot he made his way to his lodging-house. The night was warm and moist, and, seated on the stoop, stripped to shirt and trousers, was his landlord.

He greeted Jimmie affably.

"Evening, Mr. Hull," he said. "Hope this heat won't keep you awake."

Jimmie thanked him and passed hurriedly.

"Mr. Hull!"

The landlord had said it.

Somewhere out at sea, between Fire Island and Scotland Lightship, the waves were worrying with what once had been Jimmie Blagwin, and in a

hall bedroom on Twenty-third Street Henry Hull, with frightened eyes, sat staring across the wharves, across the river, thinking of a farmhouse on Long Island.

His last week on earth had been more of a strain on Jimmie than he appreciated; and the night the *Ceramic* sailed he slept the drugged sleep of complete nervous exhaustion. Late the next morning, while he still slept, a passenger on the *Ceramic* stumbled upon the fact of his disappearance. The man knew Jimmie; had greeted him the night before when he came on board, and was seeking him that he might subscribe to a pool on the run. When to his attack on Jimmie's door there was no reply, he peered through the air-port, saw on the pillow, where Jimmie's head should have been, two letters, and reported to the purser. Already the ship was three hundred miles from where Jimmie had announced he would drown himself; a search showed he was not on board, and the evidence of a smoking-room steward, who testified that at one o'clock he had left Mr. Blagwin alone on deck, gazing "mournful-like" at Fire Island, seemed to prove Jimmie had carried out his threat. When later the same passenger the steward had mistaken for Jimmie appeared in the smoking-room and ordered a drink from

him, the steward was rattled. But as the person who had last seen Jimmie Blagwin alive he had gained melancholy interest, and, as his oft-told tale was bringing him many shillings, he did not correct it. Accordingly, from Cape Sable the news of Jimmie's suicide was reported. That afternoon it appeared in all the late editions of the evening papers.

Pleading fever, Jimmie explained to his landlord that for him to venture out by day was most dangerous, and sent the landlord after the newspapers. The feelings with which he read them were mixed. He was proud of the complete success of his plot, but the inevitableness of it terrified him. The success was *too* complete. He had left himself no loophole. He had locked the door on himself and thrown the key out of the window. Now, that she was lost to him forever, he found, if that were possible, he loved his wife more devotedly than before. He felt that to live in the same world with Jeanne and never speak to her, never even look at her, could not be borne. He was of a mind to rush to the wharf and take another leap into the dark waters, and this time without a life-line. From this he was restrained only by the thought that if he used infinite caution, at infrequent intervals, at a great distance,

he still might look upon his wife. This he assured himself would be possible only after many years had aged him and turned his hair gray. Then on second thoughts he believed to wait so long was not absolutely necessary. It would be safe enough, he argued, if he grew a beard. He always had been clean-shaven, and he was confident a beard would disguise him. He wondered how long a time must pass before one would grow. Once on a hunting-trip he had gone for two weeks without shaving, and the result had not only disguised but disgusted him. His face had changed to one like those carved on cocoanuts. A recollection of this gave him great pleasure. His spirits rose happily. He saw himself in the rags of a tramp, his face hidden in an unkempt beard, skulking behind the hedges that surrounded his house. From this view-point, before sailing away from her forever, he would again steal a look at Jeanne. He determined to postpone his departure until he had grown a beard. Meanwhile he would plead illness, and keep to his room, or venture out only at night. Comforted by the thought that in two weeks he might again see his wife, as she sat on the terrace or walked in her gardens, he sank peaceably to sleep.

The next morning the landlord brought him the

papers. In them were many pictures of himself as a master of foxhounds, as a polo-player, as a gentleman jockey. The landlord looked at him curiously. Five minutes later, on a trivial excuse, he returned and again studied Jimmie as closely as though he were about to paint his portrait. Then two of the other boarders, chums of the landlord, knocked at the door, to borrow a match, to beg the loan of the morning paper. Each was obviously excited, each stared accusingly. Jimmie fell into a panic. He felt that if already his identity was questioned, than hiding in his room and growing a beard nothing could be more suspicious. At noon, for West Indian ports, a German boat was listed to sail from the Twenty-fourth Street wharf. Jimmie decided at once to sail with her and, until his beard was grown, not to return. It was necessary first to escape the suspicious landlord, and to that end he noiselessly packed his trunk and suit-case. In front of the house, in an unending procession, taxi-cabs returning empty from the Twenty-third Street ferry passed the door, and from the street Jimmie hailed one. Before the landlord could voice his doubts Jimmie was on the sidewalk, his bill had been paid, and, giving the address of a hotel on Fourteenth Street, he was away.

At the Fourteenth Street hotel Jimmie dismissed the taxi-cab and asked for a room adjoining an imaginary Senator Gates. When the clerk told him Senator Gates was not at that hotel, Jimmie excitedly demanded to be led to the telephone. He telephoned the office of the steamship line and, in the name of Henry Hull, secured a cabin. Then he explained to the clerk that over the telephone he had learned that his friend, Senator Gates, was at another hotel. He regretted that he must follow him. Another taxi was called, and Jimmie drove to an inconspicuous and old-fashioned hotel on the lower East Side, patronized exclusively by gunmen. There, in not finding Senator Gates, he was again disappointed, and now having broken the link that connected him with the suspicious landlord, he drove back to within a block of his original starting-point and went on board the ship. Not until she was off Sandy Hook did he leave his cabin.

It was July, and passengers to the tropics were few; and when Jimmie ventured on deck he found most of them gathered at the port rail. They were gazing intently over the ship's side. Thinking the pilot might be leaving, Jimmie joined them. A young man in a yachting-cap was pointing

north and speaking in the voice of a conductor of a "seeing New York" car.

"Just between that lighthouse and the bow of this ship," he exclaimed, "is where yesterday James Blagwin jumped overboard. At any moment we may see the body!"

An excitable passenger cried aloud and pointed at some floating seaweed.

"I'll bet that's it now!" he shouted.

Jimmie exclaimed indignantly:

"I'll bet you ten dollars it isn't!" he said.

In time the ship touched at Santiago, Kingston, and Colon, but, fearing recognition, Jimmie saw these places only from the deck. He travelled too fast for newspapers to overtake him, and those that on the return passage met the ship, of his death gave no details. So, except that his suicide had been accepted, Jimmie knew nothing.

Least of all did he know, or even guess, that his act of renunciation, intended to bring to Jeanne happiness, had nearly brought about her own end. She believed Jimmie was dead, but not for a moment did she believe it was for fear of blindness he had killed himself. She and Maddox had killed him. Between them they had murdered the man who, now that he was gone, she found she loved devotedly. To a shocked and frightened letter of

condolence from Maddox she wrote one that forever ordered him out of her life. Then she set about making a saint of Jimmie, and counting the days when in another world they would meet, and her years of remorse, penitence, and devotion would cause him to forgive her. In their home she shut herself off from every one. She made of it a shrine to Jimmie. She kept his gloves on the hall table; on her writing-desk she placed flowers before his picture. Preston, the butler, and the other servants who had been long with them feared for her sanity, but, loving "Mr. James" as they did, sympathized with her morbidness. So, in the old farmhouse, it was as though Jimmie still stamped through the halls, or from his room, as he dressed, whistled merrily. In the kennels the hounds howled dismally, in the stables at each footstep the ponies stamped with impatience, on the terrace his house dog, Huang Su, lay with his eyes fixed upon the road waiting for the return of the master, and in the gardens a girl in black, wasted and white-faced, walked alone and rebelled that she was still alive.

After six weeks, when the ship re-entered New York harbor, Jimmie, his beard having grown, and wearing gold-rimmed spectacles, walked boldly down the gangplank. His confidence was not

misplaced. The polo-player, clean-faced, lean, and fit, had disappeared. Six weeks of German cooking, a German barber, and the spectacles had produced a graduate of Heidelberg.

At a furnished room on a side street Jimmie left his baggage, and at once at the public library, in the back numbers of the daily papers, read the accounts of his death and interviews with his friends. They all agreed the reason for his suicide was his fear of approaching blindness. As he read, Jimmie became deeply depressed. Any sneaking hopes he might have held that he was not dead were now destroyed. The evidence of his friends was enough to convince any one. It convinced him. Now that it was too late, his act of self-sacrifice appeared supremely stupid and ridiculous. Bitterly he attacked himself as a bungler and an ass. He assured himself he should have made a fight for it; should have fought for his wife and against Maddox. Instead of which he weakly had effaced himself, had surrendered his rights, had abandoned his wife at a time when most was required of him. He tortured himself by thinking that probably at that very moment she was in need of his help. And at that very moment head-lines in the paper he was searching proved this was true.

"BLAGWIN'S LOST WILL," he read. "DETECTIVES RELINQUISH SEARCH! REWARD OF TEN THOUSAND DOLLARS FAILS TO BRING CLEW!" Jimmie raced through the back numbers. They told him his will, in which he had left everything to Jeanne, could not be found; that in consequence, except her widow's third, all of his real estate, which was the bulk of his property, would now go to two distant cousins who already possessed more than was good for them, and who in Paris were leading lives of elegant wastefulness. The will had been signed the week before his wedding-day, but the lawyer who had drawn it was dead, and the witnesses, two servants, had long since quit Jimmie's service and could not be found. It was known Jimmie kept the will in the safe at his country house, but from the safe it had disappeared.

Jimmie's best friend, and now Jeanne's lawyer, the man who had refused him the divorce, had searched the house from the attic to the coal cellar; detectives had failed to detect; rewards had remained unclaimed; no one could tell where the will was hidden. Only Jimmie could tell. And Jimmie was dead. And no one knew that better than Jimmie. Again he upbraided himself. Why had he not foreseen this catastrophe? Why,

before his final taking off, had he not returned the will to the safe? Now, a word from him would give Jeanne all his fortune, and that word he could not speak.

The will was between the leaves of a copy of "Pickwick," and it stood on a shelf in his bedroom. One night, six months before, to alter a small bequest, he had carried the will up-stairs and written a rough draft of the new codicil. And then, merely because he was sleepy and disinclined to struggle with a combination lock, he had stuck the will in the book he was reading. He intended the first thing the next morning to put it back in the safe. But the first thing the next morning word came from the kennels that during the night six beagle puppies had arrived, and naturally Jimmie gave no thought to anything so unimportant as a will. Nor since then had he thought of it. And now how was he, a dead man, to retrieve it?

That those in the library might not observe his agitation, he went outside, and in Bryant Park on a bench faced his problem. Except himself, of the hidden place of the will no one could possibly know. So, if even by an anonymous letter, or by telephone, he gave the information to his late lawyer or to the detectives, they at once would

guess from where the clew came and that James Blagwin was still alive. So that plan was abandoned. Then he wondered if he might not convey the tip to some one who had access to his bedroom; his valet or a chambermaid who, as though by accident, might stumble upon the will. But, as every one would know the anonymous tipster could be only Blagwin himself, that plan also was rejected. He saw himself in a blind alley. Without an accomplice he could not act; with an accomplice his secret would be betrayed.

Suddenly a line in one of the newspapers returned to him. It was to the effect that to discover the lost will several clairvoyants, mediums, and crystal-gazers had offered their services. Jimmie determined that one of these should be his accomplice. He would tell the clairvoyant he formerly had been employed as valet by Blagwin and knew where Blagwin had placed his will. But he had been discharged under circumstances that made it necessary for him to lie low. He would hint it was the police he feared. This would explain why he could not come forward, and why he sought the aid of the clairvoyant. If the clairvoyant fell in with his plan he would tell him where the will could be found, the clairvoyant would pretend in a trance to discover

the hiding-place, would confide his discovery to Mrs. Blagwin's lawyer, the lawyer would find the will, the clairvoyant would receive the reward, and an invaluable advertisement. And Jimmie's ghost would rest in peace. He needed only a clairvoyant who was not so upright that he fell over backward. Jimmie assured himself one of that kind would not be difficult to find.

He returned to the newspaper-room of the library and in the advertising columns of a Sunday paper found a clairvoyant who promised to be the man he wanted.

He was an Indian prince, but for five dollars would tell fortunes, cast horoscopes, and recover lost articles. Jimmie found him in the back room on the first floor of an old-fashioned house of sandstone on a side street. A blonde young woman, who was directing envelopes and enclosing in them the business card of the prince, accepted Jimmie's five dollars and ushered him into the presence. The back room was very dark. There were no windows showing, and the walls were entirely hidden by curtains in which twinkled tiny mirrors. The only light came from a lamp that swung on chains.

The prince was young, tall, dark-skinned, with a black, pointed beard. He wore his national

costume and over it many necklaces of strange stones, and of jewels more strange. He sat on a papier-maché throne with gilded elephants for supports, and in his hand held a crystal globe. His head was all but hidden in an enormous silken turban on which hung a single pearl. Jimmie made up his mind that if the prince was no more on the level than his jewels there would be no trouble.

Jimmie came quickly to the point.

"I can't show up," he explained, "because after I lost my job as Mr. Blagwin's valet several articles of value were missing. But *you* can show up for me. If the will is not where I saw it —where I tell you it is—you're no worse off than you are now. You can say the spirits misled you. But, if I'm telling you the truth, you stand to get half the reward and the biggest press story any ghost-raiser ever put across.

"And why," in conclusion Jimmie demanded, "should I ask you to do this, if what I say is not true?"

The prince made no reply.

With a sweeping gesture he brought the crystal globe into his lap and, bending his head, apparently peered into its depths. In reality he was gaining time. To himself he was repeating

Jimmie's question. If the stranger were *not* speaking the truth, why was he asking him to join in a plot to deceive? The possibility that Jimmie *was* telling the truth the prince did not even consider. He was not used to the truth, and as to the motives of Jimmie in inviting him to break the law he already had made his guess. It was that Jimmie must be a detective setting a trap which later would betray him to the police. And the prince had no desire to fall in with the police nor to fall out with them. All he ever asked of those gentlemen was to leave him alone. And, since apparently they would not leave him alone, he saw, deep down in the crystal globe, a way by which not only could he avoid their trap, but might spring it to his own advantage.

Instead of the detective denouncing him, he would denounce the detective. Of the police he would become an ally. He would call upon them to arrest a man who was planning to blackmail Mrs. James Blagwin.

Unseen by Jimmie, in the arm of his throne he pressed an electric button, and in the front room in the ear of the blonde a signal buzzed. In her turn the blonde pushed aside the curtains that hid the door to the front hall.

"Pardon, Highness," she said, "a certain party in Wall Street"—she paused impressively, and the prince nodded—"wants to consult you about his Standard Oil stock."

"He must wait," returned the prince.

"Pardon, Highness," persisted the lady; "he cannot wait. It is a matter of millions."

Of this dialogue, which was the vehicle always used to get the prince out of the audience-chamber and into the front hall, undoubtedly the best line was the one given to the blonde—"it is a matter of millions!"

Knowing this, she used to speak it slowly and impressively. It impressed even Jimmie. And after the prince had reverently deposited his globe upon a velvet cushion and disappeared, Jimmie sat wondering who in Wall Street was rich enough to buy Standard Oil stock, and who was fool enough to sell it.

But over such idle questions he was not long left to meditate. Something more personal demanded his full attention. Behind him the prince carefully had closed the door to the front hall. But, not having his crystal globe with him, he did not know it had not remained closed, and as he stood under the hall stairs and softly lifted the receiver from the telephone, he was not aware

that his voice carried to the room in which Jimmie was waiting.

"Hello," whispered the prince softly. His voice, Jimmie noted with approval, even over a public telephone was as gentle as a cooing dove.

"Hello! Give me Spring 3100."

A cold sweat swept down Jimmie's spine. A man might forget his birthday, his middle name, his own telephone number, but not Spring 3100!

Every drama of the underworld, crook play, and detective story had helped to make it famous.

Jimmie stood not upon the order of his going. Even while police headquarters was telling the prince to get the Forty-seventh Street police station, Jimmie had torn open the front door and was leaping down the steps.

Not until he reached Sixth Avenue, where if a man is seen running every one takes a chance and yells "Stop thief!" did Jimmie draw a halt. Then he burst forth indignantly.

"How was I to know he was honest!" he panted. "He's a hell of a clairvoyant!"

With indignation as great the prince was gazing at the blonde secretary; his eyes were filled with amazement.

"Am I going dippy?" he demanded. "I sized him up for a detective—and he was a per-

fectly honest crook! And in five minutes," he roared remorsefully, "this house will be full of bulls! What am I to do? What am I to tell 'em?"

"Tell 'em," said the blonde coldly, "you're going on a long journey."

Jimmie now appreciated that when he determined it was best he should work without an accomplice he was most wise. He must work alone and, lest the clairvoyant had set the police after him, at once. He decided swiftly that that night he would return to his own house, and that he would return as a burglar. From its hiding-place he would rescue the missing will and restore it to the safe. By placing it among papers of little importance he hoped to persuade those who already had searched the safe that through their own carelessness it had been overlooked. The next morning, when once more it was where the proper persons could find it, he would again take ship for foreign parts. Jimmie recognized that this was a desperate plan, but the situation was desperate.

And so midnight found him entering the grounds upon which he never again had hoped to place his foot.

The conditions were in his favor. The night

was warm, which meant windows would be left open; few stars were shining, and as he tiptoed across the lawn the trees and bushes wrapped him in shadows. Inside the hedge, through which he had forced his way, he had left his shoes, and he moved in silence. Except that stealing into the house where lay asleep the wife he so dearly loved made a cruel assault upon his feelings, the adventure presented no difficulties. Of ways of entering his house Jimmie knew a dozen, and, once inside, from cellar to attic he could move blindfolded. His bedroom, where was the copy of "Pickwick" in which he had placed the will, was separated from his wife's bedroom by her boudoir. The walls were thick; through them no ordinary sound could penetrate, and, unless since his departure Jeanne had moved her maid or some other chaperon into his bedroom, he could ransack it at his leisure. The safe in which he would replace the will was in the dining-room. From the sleeping-quarters of Preston, the butler, and the other servants it was far removed.

Cautiously in the black shadows of the trees Jimmie reconnoitred. All that was in evidence reassured him. The old farmhouse lay sunk in slumber, and, though in the lower hall a lamp burned, Jimmie knew it was lit only that, in case

of fire or of an intruder like himself, it might show the way to the telephone. For a moment a lace curtain fluttering at an open window startled him, but in an instant he was reassured, and had determined through that window to make his entrance. He stepped out of the shadows toward the veranda, and at once something warm brushed his leg, something moist touched his hand.

Huang Su, his black chow, was welcoming him home. In a sudden access of fright and pleasure Jimmie dropped to his knees. He had not known he had been so lonely. He smothered the black bear in his hands. Huang Su withdrew hastily. The dignity of his breed forbade man-handling, and at a safe distance he stretched himself nervously and yawned.

Jimmie stepped to the railing of the veranda, raised his foot to a cleat of the awning, and swung himself sprawling upon the veranda roof. On hands and knees across the shingles, still warm from the sun, he crept to the open window. There for some minutes, while his eyes searched the room, he remained motionless. When his eyes grew used to the semidarkness he saw that the bed lay flat, that the door to the boudoir was shut, that the room was empty. As he moved across it toward the bookcase, his stockinged feet on

the bare oak floor gave forth no sound. He assured himself there was no occasion for alarm. But when, with the electric torch with which he had prepared himself, he swept the book-shelves, he suffered all the awful terrors of a thief.

His purpose was to restore a lost fortune; had he been intent on stealing one he could not have felt more deeply guilty. At last the tiny shaft of light fell upon the title of the "Pickwick Papers." With shaking fingers Jimmie drew the book toward him. In his hands it fell open, and before him lay "The Last Will and Testament of James Blagwin, Esquire."

With an effort Jimmie choked a cry of delight. He had reason to feel relief. In dragging the will from its hiding-place he had put behind him the most difficult part of his adventure; the final ceremony of replacing it in the safe was a matter only of minutes. With self-satisfaction Jimmie smiled; in self-pity he sighed miserably. For, when those same minutes had passed, again he would be an exile. As soon as he had set his house in order, he must leave it, and once more upon the earth become a wanderer and an outcast.

The knob of the door from the bedroom he grasped softly and, as he turned it, firmly. Stealthily, with infinite patience and stepping close to

the wall, he descended the stairs, tiptoed across the hall, and entered the living-room. On the lower floor he knew he was alone. No longer, like Oliver Twist breaking into the scullery of Mr. Giles, need he move in dreadful fear. But as a cautious general, even when he advances, maps out his line of retreat, before approaching the safe Jimmie prepared his escape. The only entrances to the dining-room were through the living-room, in which he stood, and from the butler's pantry. It was through the latter he determined to make his exit. He crossed the dining-room, and in the pantry cautiously raised the window, and on the floor below placed a chair. If while at work upon the safe he were interrupted, to reach the lawn he had but to thrust back the door to the pantry, leap to the chair, and through the open window fall upon the grass. If his possible pursuers gave him time, he would retrieve his shoes; if not, he would abandon them. They had not been made to his order, but bought in the Sixth Avenue store where he was unknown, and they had been delivered to a man named Henry Hull. If found, instead of compromising him, they rather would help to prove the intruder was a stranger.

Having arranged his get-away, Jimmie returned to the living-room. In defiance of caution

and that he might carry with him a farewell picture of the place where for years he had been so supremely happy, he swept it with his torch.

The light fell upon Jeanne's writing-desk and there halted. Jimmie gave a low gasp of pleasure and surprise. In the shaft of light, undisturbed in their silver frames and in their place of honor, he saw three photographs of himself. The tears came to his eyes. Then Jeanne had not cast him utterly into outer darkness. She still remembered him kindly, still held for him a feeling of good will. Jimmie sighed gratefully. The sacrifice he had made for the happiness of Jeanne and Maddox now seemed easier to bear. And that happiness must not be jeopardized.

More than ever before the fact that he, a dead man, must not be seen, impressed him deeply. At the slightest sound, at even the suggestion of an alarm, he must fly. The will might take care of itself. In case he were interrupted, where he dropped it there must it lie. The fact of supreme importance was that unrecognized he should escape.

The walls of the dining-room were covered with panels of oak, and built into the jog of the fireplace and concealed by a movable panel was the safe. In front of it Jimmie sank to his knees and

pushed back the panel. Propped upon a chair behind him, the electric torch threw its shaft of light full upon the combination lock. On the floor, ready to his hand, lay the will.

The combination was not difficult. It required two turns left, three right, and in conjunction two numerals. While so intent upon his work that he scarcely breathed, Jimmie spun the knob. Then he tugged gently, and the steel door swung toward him.

At the same moment, from behind him, a metallic click gave an instant's warning, and then the room was flooded with light.

From his knees, in one bound, Jimmie flung himself toward his avenue of escape.

It was blocked by the bulky form of Preston, the butler.

Jimmie turned and doubled back to the door of the living-room. He found himself confronted by his wife.

The sleeve of her night-dress had fallen to her shoulder and showed her white arm extended toward him. In her hand, pointing, was an automatic pistol.

Already dead, Jimmie feared nothing but discovery.

The door to the living-room was wide enough

for two. With his head down he sprang toward it. There was a report that seemed to shake the walls, and something like the blow of a night-stick knocked his leg from under him and threw him on his back. The next instant Preston had landed with both knees on his lower ribs and was squeezing his windpipe.

Jimmie felt he was drowning. Around him millions of stars danced. And then from another world, in a howl of terror, the voice of Preston screamed. The hands of the butler released their hold upon his throat. As suddenly as he had thrown himself upon him he now recoiled.

"It's *'im!*" he shouted; "it's *'im!*"

"Him?" demanded Jeanne.

"*It's Mr. Blagwin!*"

Unlike Preston, Jeanne did not scream; nor did she faint. So greatly did she desire to believe that "'im" was her husband, that he still was in the same world with herself, that she did not ask how he had escaped from the other world, or why, having escaped, he spent his time robbing his own house.

Instead, much like Preston, she threw herself at him and in her young, firm arms lifted him and held him close.

"Jimmie!" she cried, "*speak* to me; *speak* to me!"

The blow on the back of the head, the throttling by Preston, the "stopping power" of the bullet, even though it passed only through his leg, had left Jimmie somewhat confused. He knew only that it was a dream. But wonderful as it was to dream that once more he was with Jeanne, that she clung to him, needed and welcomed him, he could not linger to enjoy the dream. He was dead. If not, he must escape. Honor compelled it. He made a movement to rise, and fell back.

The voice of Preston, because he had choked his master, full of remorse, and, because his mistress had shot him, full of reproach, rose in dismay:

"You've 'it 'im in the leg, ma'am!"

Jimmie heard Jeanne protest hysterically:

"That's nothing, he's *alive!*" she cried. "I'd hit him again if it would only make him *speak!*" She pressed the bearded face against her own. "Speak to me," she whispered; "tell me you forgive me. Tell me you love me!"

Jimmie opened his eyes and smiled at her.

"You never had to shoot me," he stammered, "to make me tell you *that*."

THE CARD-SHARP

THE CARD-SHARP

I HAD looked forward to spending Christmas with some people in Suffolk, and every one in London assured me that at their house there would be the kind of a Christmas house party you hear about but see only in the illustrated Christmas numbers. They promised mistletoe, snapdragon, and Sir Roger de Coverley. On Christmas morning we would walk to church, after luncheon we would shoot, after dinner we would eat plum pudding floating in blazing brandy, dance with the servants, and listen to the waits singing "God rest you, merry gentlemen, let nothing you dismay."

To a lone American bachelor stranded in London it sounded fine. And in my gratitude I had already shipped to my hostess, for her children, of whose age, number, and sex I was ignorant, half of Gamage's dolls, skees, and cricket bats, and those crackers that, when you pull them, sometimes explode. But it was not to be. Most inconsiderately my wealthiest patient gained suf-

ficient courage to consent to an operation, and in all New York would permit no one to lay violent hands upon him save myself. By cable I advised postponement. Having lived in lawful harmony with his appendix for fifty years, I thought, for one week longer he might safely maintain the *status quo*. But his cable in reply was an ultimatum. So, on Christmas eve, instead of Hallam Hall and a Yule log, I was in a gale plunging and pitching off the coast of Ireland, and the only log on board was the one the captain kept to himself.

I sat in the smoking-room, depressed and cross, and it must have been on the principle that misery loves company that I forgathered with Talbot, or rather that Talbot forgathered with me. Certainly, under happier conditions and in haunts of men more crowded, the open-faced manner in which he forced himself upon me would have put me on my guard. But, either out of deference to the holiday spirit, as manifested in the fictitious gayety of our few fellow passengers, or because the young man in a knowing, impertinent way was most amusing, I listened to him from dinner time until midnight, when the chief officer, hung with snow and icicles, was blown in from the deck and wished all a merry Christmas.

Even after they unmasked Talbot I had neither

the heart nor the inclination to turn him down. Indeed, had not some of the passengers testified that I belonged to a different profession, the smoking-room crowd would have quarantined me as his accomplice. On the first night I met him I was not certain whether he was English or giving an imitation. All the outward and visible signs were English, but he told me that, though he had been educated at Oxford and since then had spent most of his years in India, playing polo, he was an American. He seemed to have spent much time, and according to himself much money, at the French watering-places and on the Riviera. I felt sure that it was in France I had already seen him, but where I could not recall. He was hard to place. Of people at home and in London well worth knowing he talked glibly, but in speaking of them he made several slips. It was his taking the trouble to cover up the slips that first made me wonder if his talking about himself was not mere vanity, but had some special object. I felt he was presenting letters of introduction in order that later he might ask a favor. Whether he was leading up to an immediate loan, or in New York would ask for a card to a club, or an introduction to a banker, I could not tell. But in forcing himself upon me, except in self-interest,

I could think of no other motive. The next evening I discovered the motive.

He was in the smoking-room playing solitaire, and at once I recalled that it was at Aix-les-Bains I had first seen him, and that he held a bank at baccarat. When he asked me to sit down I said: "I saw you last summer at Aix-les-Bains."

His eyes fell to the pack in his hands and apparently searched it for some particular card.

"What was I doing?" he asked.

"Dealing baccarat at the Casino des Fleurs."

With obvious relief he laughed.

"Oh, yes," he assented; "jolly place, Aix. But I lost a pot of money there. I'm a rotten hand at cards. Can't win, and can't leave 'em alone." As though for this weakness, so frankly confessed, he begged me to excuse him, he smiled appealingly. "Poker, bridge, chemin de fer, I like 'em all," he rattled on, "but they don't like me. So I stick to solitaire. It's dull, but cheap." He shuffled the cards clumsily. As though making conversation, he asked: "You care for cards yourself?"

I told him truthfully I did not know the difference between a club and a spade and had no curiosity to learn. At this, when he found he had been wasting time on me, I expected him to

show some sign of annoyance, even of irritation, but his disappointment struck far deeper. As though I had hurt him physically, he shut his eyes, and when again he opened them I saw in them distress. For the moment I believe of my presence he was utterly unconscious. His hands lay idle upon the table; like a man facing a crisis, he stared before him. Quite improperly, I felt sorry for him. In me he thought he had found a victim; and that the loss of the few dollars he might have won should so deeply disturb him showed his need was great. Almost at once he abandoned me and I went on deck. When I returned an hour later to the smoking-room he was deep in a game of poker.

As I passed he hailed me gayly.

"Don't scold, now," he laughed; "you know I can't keep away from it."

From his manner those at the table might have supposed we were friends of long and happy companionship. I stopped behind his chair, but he thought I had passed, and in reply to one of the players answered: "Known him for years; he's set me right many a time. When I broke my right femur 'chasin,' he got me back in the saddle in six weeks. All my people swear by him."

One of the players smiled up at me, and Talbot

turned. But his eyes met mine with perfect serenity. He even held up his cards for me to see. "What would you draw?" he asked.

His audacity so astonished me that in silence I could only stare at him and walk on.

When on deck he met me he was not even apologetic. Instead, as though we were partners in crime, he chuckled delightedly.

"Sorry," he said. "Had to do it. They weren't very keen at my taking a hand, so I had to use your name. But I'm all right now," he assured me. "They think you vouched for me, and tonight they're going to raise the limit. I've convinced them I'm an easy mark."

"And I take it you are not," I said stiffly.

He considered this unworthy of an answer and only smiled. Then the smile died, and again in his eyes I saw distress, infinite weariness, and fear.

As though his thoughts drove him to seek protection, he came closer.

"I'm 'in bad,' doctor," he said. His voice was frightened, bewildered, like that of a child. "I can't sleep; nerves all on the loose. I don't think straight. I hear voices, and no one around. I hear knockings at the door, and when I open it, no one there. If I don't keep fit I can't work, and this trip I *got* to make expenses. You

couldn't help me, could you—couldn't give me something to keep my head straight?"

The need of my keeping his head straight that he might the easier rob our fellow passengers raised a pretty question of ethics. I meanly dodged it. I told him professional etiquette required I should leave him to the ship's surgeon.

"But I don't know *him*," he protested.

Mindful of the use he had made of my name, I objected strenuously:

"Well, you certainly don't know me."

My resentment obviously puzzled him.

"I know who you *are*," he returned. "You and I—" With a deprecatory gesture, as though good taste forbade him saying who we were, he stopped. "But the ship's surgeon!" he protested; "he's an awful bounder! Besides," he added quite simply, "he's watching me."

"As a doctor," I asked, "or watching you play cards?"

"Play cards," the young man answered. "I'm afraid he was ship's surgeon on the P. & O. I came home on. There was trouble that voyage, and I fancy he remembers me."

His confidences were becoming a nuisance.

"But you mustn't tell me that," I protested. "I can't have you making trouble on this ship,

too. How do you know I won't go straight from here to the captain?"

As though the suggestion greatly entertained him, he laughed.

He made a mock obeisance.

"I claim the seal of your profession," he said.

"Nonsense," I retorted. "It's a professional secret that your nerves are out of hand, but that you are a card-sharp is *not*. Don't mix me up with a priest."

For a moment Talbot, as though fearing he had gone too far, looked at me sharply; he bit his lower lip and frowned.

"I got to make expenses," he muttered. "And, besides, all card games are games of chance, and a card-sharp is one of the chances. Anyway," he repeated, as though disposing of all argument, "I got to make expenses."

After dinner, when I came to the smoking-room, the poker party sat waiting, and one of them asked if I knew where they could find "my friend." I should have said then that Talbot was a steamer acquaintance only; but I hate a row, and I let the chance pass.

"We want to give him his revenge," one of them volunteered.

"He's losing, then?" I asked.

The man chuckled complacently.

"The only loser," he said.

"I wouldn't worry," I advised. "He'll come for his revenge."

That night after I had turned in he knocked at my door. I switched on the lights and saw him standing at the foot of my berth. I saw also that with difficulty he was holding himself in hand.

"I'm scared," he stammered, "scared!"

I wrote out a requisition on the surgeon for a sleeping-potion and sent it to him by the steward, giving the man to understand I wanted it for myself. Uninvited, Talbot had seated himself on the sofa. His eyes were closed, and as though he were cold he was shivering and hugging himself in his arms.

"Have you been drinking?" I asked.

In surprise he opened his eyes.

"*I* can't drink," he answered simply. "It's nerves and worry. I'm tired."

He relaxed against the cushions; his arms fell heavily at his sides; the fingers lay open.

"God," he whispered, "how tired I am!"

In spite of his tan—and certainly he had led the out-of-door life—his face showed white. For the moment he looked old, worn, finished.

"They're crowdin' me," the boy whispered. "They're always crowdin' me." His voice was querulous, uncomprehending, like that of a child complaining of something beyond his experience. "I can't remember when they haven't been crowdin' me. Movin' me on, you understand? Always movin' me on. Moved me out of India, then Cairo, then they closed Paris, and now they've shut me out of London. I opened a club there, very quiet, very exclusive, smart neighborhood, too — a flat in Berkeley Street — roulette and chemin de fer. I think it was my valet sold me out; anyway, they came in and took us all to Bow Street. So I've plunged on this. It's my last chance!"

"This trip?"

"No; my family in New York. Haven't seen 'em in ten years. They paid me to live abroad. I'm gambling on *them;* gambling on their takin' me back. I'm coming home as the Prodigal Son, tired of filling my belly with the husks that the swine do eat; reformed character, repentant and all that; want to follow the straight and narrow; and they'll kill the fatted calf." He laughed sardonically. "Like hell they will! They'd rather see *me* killed."

It seemed to me, if he wished his family to be-

lieve he were returning repentant, his course in the smoking-room would not help to reassure them. I suggested as much.

"If you get into 'trouble,' as you call it," I said, "and they send a wireless to the police to be at the wharf, your people would hardly——"

"I know," he interrupted; "but I got to chance that. I *got* to make enough to go on with—until I see my family."

"If they won't see you?" I asked. "What then?"

He shrugged his shoulders and sighed lightly, almost with relief, as though for him the prospect held no terror.

"Then it's 'Good night, nurse,'" he said. "And I won't be a bother to anybody any more."

I told him his nerves were talking, and talking rot, and I gave him the sleeping-draft and sent him to bed.

It was not until after luncheon the next day when he made his first appearance on deck that I again saw my patient. He was once more a healthy picture of a young Englishman of leisure; keen, smart, and fit; ready for any exercise or sport. The particular sport at which he was so expert I asked him to avoid.

"Can't be done!" he assured me. "I'm the loser, and we dock to-morrow morning. So to-night I've got to make my killing."

It was the others who made the killing.

I came into the smoking-room about nine o'clock. Talbot alone was seated. The others were on their feet, and behind them in a wider semicircle were passengers, the smoking-room stewards, and the ship's purser.

Talbot sat with his back against the bulkhead, his hands in the pockets of his dinner coat; from the corner of his mouth his long cigarette-holder was cocked at an impudent angle. There was a tumult of angry voices, and the eyes of all were turned upon him. Outwardly at least he met them with complete indifference. The voice of one of my countrymen, a noisy pest named Smedburg, was raised in excited accusation.

"When the ship's surgeon first met you," he cried, "you called yourself Lord Ridley."

"I'll call myself anything I jolly well like," returned Talbot. "If I choose to dodge reporters, that's *my* pidgin. I don't have to give my name to every meddling busybody that——"

"You'll give it to the police, all right," chortled Mr. Smedburg. In the confident, bullying tone of the man who knows the crowd is with

him, he shouted: "And in the meantime you'll keep out of this smoking-room!"

The chorus of assent was unanimous. It could not be disregarded. Talbot rose and with fastidious concern brushed the cigarette ashes from his sleeve. As he moved toward the door he called back: "Only too delighted to keep out. The crowd in this room makes a gentleman feel lonely."

But he was not to escape with the last word.

His prosecutor pointed his finger at him.

"And the next time you take the name of Adolph Meyer," he shouted, "make sure first he hasn't a friend on board; some one to protect him from sharpers and swindlers——"

Talbot turned savagely and then shrugged his shoulders.

"Oh, go to the devil!" he called, and walked out into the night.

The purser was standing at my side and, catching my eye, shook his head.

"Bad business," he exclaimed.

"What happened?" I asked.

"I'm told they caught him dealing from the wrong end of the pack," he said. "I understand they suspected him from the first—seems our surgeon recognized him—and to-night they had

outsiders watching him. The outsiders claim they saw him slip himself an ace from the bottom of the pack. It's a pity! He's a nice-looking lad."

I asked what the excited Smedburg had meant by telling Talbot not to call himself Meyer.

"They accused him of travelling under a false name," explained the purser, "and he told 'em he did it to dodge the ship's news reporters. Then he said he *really* was a brother of Adolph Meyer, the banker; but it seems Smedburg is a friend of Meyer's, and he called him hard! It was a silly ass thing to do," protested the purser. "Everybody knows Meyer hasn't a brother, and if he hadn't made *that* break he might have got away with the other one. But now this Smedburg is going to wireless ahead to Mr. Meyer and to the police."

"Has he no other way of spending his money?" I asked.

"He's a confounded nuisance!" growled the purser. "He wants to show us he knows Adolph Meyer; wants to put Meyer under an obligation. It means a scene on the wharf, and newspaper talk; and," he added with disgust, "these smoking-room rows never helped any line."

I went in search of Talbot; partly because I

knew he was on the verge of a collapse, partly, as I frankly admitted to myself, because I was sorry the young man had come to grief. I searched the snow-swept decks, and then, after threading my way through faintly lit tunnels, I knocked at his cabin. The sound of his voice gave me a distinct feeling of relief. But he would not admit me. Through the closed door he declared he was "all right," wanted no medical advice, and asked only to resume the sleep he claimed I had broken. I left him, not without uneasiness, and the next morning the sight of him still in the flesh was a genuine thrill. I found him walking the deck carrying himself nonchalantly and trying to appear unconscious of the glances—amused, contemptuous, hostile—that were turned toward him. He would have passed me without speaking, but I took his arm and led him to the rail. We had long passed quarantine and a convoy of tugs were butting us into the dock.

"What are you going to do?" I asked.

"Doesn't depend on me," he said. "Depends on Smedburg. He's a busy little body!"

The boy wanted me to think him unconcerned, but beneath the flippancy I saw the nerves jerking. Then quite simply he began to tell me. He spoke in a low, even monotone, dispassion-

ately, as though for him the incident no longer was of interest.

"They were watching me," he said. "But I *knew* they were, and besides, no matter how close they watched I could have done what they said I did and they'd never have seen it. But I didn't."

My scepticism must have been obvious, for he shook his head.

"I didn't!" he repeated stubbornly. "I didn't have to! I was playing in luck—wonderful luck —sheer, dumb luck. I couldn't *help* winning. But because I *was* winning and because they were watching, I was careful not to win on my own deal. I laid down, or played to lose. It was the cards *they* gave me I won with. And when they jumped me I told 'em that. I could have proved it if they'd listened. But they were all up in the air, shouting and spitting at me. They believed what they wanted to believe; they didn't want the facts."

It may have been credulous of me, but I felt the boy was telling the truth, and I was deeply sorry he had not stuck to it. So, rather harshly, I said:

"They didn't want you to tell them you were a brother to Adolph Meyer, either. Why did you

think you could get away with anything like that?"

Talbot did not answer.

"Why?" I insisted.

The boy laughed impudently.

"How the devil was I to know he hadn't a brother?" he protested. "It was a good name, and he's a Jew, and two of the six who were in the game are Jews. You know how they stick together. I thought they might stick by me."

"But you," I retorted impatiently, "are not a Jew!"

"I am not," said Talbot, "but I've often *said* I was. It's helped—lots of times. If I'd told you my name was Cohen, or Selinsky, or Meyer, instead of Craig Talbot, *you'd* have thought I was a Jew." He smiled and turned his face toward me. As though furnishing a description for the police, he began to enumerate:

"Hair, dark and curly; eyes, poppy; lips, full; nose, Roman or Hebraic, according to taste. Do you see?"

He shrugged his shoulders.

"But it didn't work," he concluded. "I picked the wrong Jew."

His face grew serious. "Do you suppose that Smedburg person *has* wirelessed that banker?"

I told him I was afraid he had already sent the message.

"And what will Meyer do?" he asked. "Will he drop it or make a fuss? What sort is he?"

Briefly I described Adolph Meyer. I explained him as the richest Hebrew in New York; given to charity, to philanthropy, to the betterment of his own race."

"Then maybe," cried Talbot hopefully, "he won't make a row, and my family won't hear of it!"

He drew a quick breath of relief. As though a burden had been lifted, his shoulders straightened.

And then suddenly, harshly, in open panic, he exclaimed aloud:

"Look!" he whispered. "There, at the end of the wharf—the little Jew in furs!"

I followed the direction of his eyes. Below us on the dock, protected by two obvious members of the strong-arm squad, the great banker, philanthropist, and Hebrew, Adolph Meyer, was waiting.

We were so close that I could read his face. It was stern, set; the face of a man intent upon his duty, unrelenting. Without question, of a bad business Mr. Smedburg had made the worst.

I turned to speak to Talbot and found him gone.

His silent slipping away filled me with alarm. I fought against a growing fear. How many minutes I searched for him I do not know. It seemed many hours. His cabin, where first I sought him, was empty and dismantled, and by that I was reminded that if for any desperate purpose Talbot were seeking to conceal himself there now were hundreds of other empty, dismantled cabins in which he might hide. To my inquiries no one gave heed. In the confusion of departure no one had observed him; no one was in a humor to seek him out; the passengers were pressing to the gangway, the stewards concerned only in counting their tips. From deck to deck, down lane after lane of the great floating village, I raced blindly, peering into half-opened doors, pushing through groups of men, pursuing some one in the distance who appeared to be the man I sought, only to find he was unknown to me. When I returned to the gangway the last of the passengers was leaving it.

I was about to follow to seek for Talbot in the customs shed when a white-faced steward touched my sleeve. Before he spoke his look told me why I was wanted.

"The ship's surgeon, sir," he stammered, "asks you please to hurry to the sick-bay. A passenger has shot himself!"

On the bed, propped up by pillows, young Talbot, with glazed, shocked eyes, stared at me. His shirt had been cut away; his chest lay bare. Against his left shoulder the doctor pressed a tiny sponge which quickly darkened.

I must have exclaimed aloud, for the doctor turned his eyes.

"It was *he* sent for you," he said, "but he doesn't need you. Fortunately, he's a damned bad shot!"

The boy's eyes opened wearily; before we could prevent it he spoke.

"I was so tired," he whispered. "Always moving me on. I was so tired!"

Behind me came heavy footsteps, and though with my arm I tried to bar them out, the two detectives pushed into the doorway. They shoved me to one side and through the passage made for him came the Jew in the sable coat, Mr. Adolph Meyer.

For an instant the little great man stood with wide, owl-like eyes, staring at the face on the pillow.

Then he sank softly to his knees. In both his hands he caught the hand of the card-sharp.

"Heine!" he begged. "Don't you know me? It is your brother Adolph; your little brother Adolph!"

BILLY AND THE BIG STICK

BILLY AND THE BIG STICK

HAD the Wilmot Electric Light people remained content only to make light, had they not, as a by-product, attempted to make money, they need not have left Hayti.

When they flooded with radiance the unpaved streets of Port-au-Prince no one, except the police, who complained that the lights kept them awake, made objection; but when for this illumination the Wilmot Company demanded payment, every one up to President Hamilcar Poussevain was surprised and grieved. So grieved was President Ham, as he was lovingly designated, that he withdrew the Wilmot concession, surrounded the power-house with his barefooted army, and in a proclamation announced that for the future the furnishing of electric light would be a monopoly of the government.

In Hayti, as soon as it begins to make money, any industry, native or foreign, becomes a monopoly of the government. The thing works automatically. It is what in Hayti is understood as

haut finance. The Wilmot people should have known that. Because they did not know that, they stood to lose what they had sunk in the electric-light plant, and after their departure to New York, which departure was accelerated as far as the wharf by seven generals and twelve privates, they proceeded to lose more money on lobbyists and lawyers who claimed to understand international law; even the law of Hayti. And lawyers who understand that are high-priced.

The only employee of the Wilmot force who was not escorted to the wharf under guard was Billy Barlow. He escaped the honor because he was superintendent of the power-house, and President Ham believed that without him the lightning would not strike. Accordingly by an executive order Billy became an employee of the government. With this arrangement the Wilmot people were much pleased. For they trusted Billy, and they knew while in the courts they were fighting to regain their property, he would see no harm came to it.

Billy's title was Directeur Général et Inspecteur Municipal de Luminaire Electrique, which is some title, and his salary was fifty dollars a week. In spite of Billy's color President Ham always treated his only white official with courtesy and

gave him his full title. About giving him his full salary he was less particular. This neglect greatly annoyed Billy. He came of sturdy New England stock and possessed that New England conscience which makes the owner a torment to himself, and to every one else a nuisance. Like all the other Barlows of Barnstable on Cape Cod, Billy had worked for his every penny. He was no shirker. From the first day that he carried a pair of pliers in the leg pocket of his overalls, and in a sixty-knot gale stretched wires between ice-capped telegraph poles, he had more than earned his wages. Never, whether on time or at piece-work, had he by a slovenly job, or by beating the whistle, robbed his employer. And for his honest toil he was determined to be as honestly paid—even by President Hamilcar Poussevain. And President Ham never paid anybody; neither the Armenian street peddlers, in whose sweets he delighted, nor the Bethlehem Steel Company, nor the house of Rothschild.

Why he paid Billy even the small sums that from time to time Billy wrung from the president's strong box the foreign colony were at a loss to explain. Wagner, the new American consul, asked Billy how he managed it. As an American minister had not yet been appointed,

to the duties of the consul, as Wagner assured everybody, were added those of diplomacy. But Haytian diplomacy he had yet to master. At the seaport in Scotland where he had served as vice-consul, law and order were as solidly established as the stone jetties, and by contrast the eccentricities of the Black Republic baffled and distressed him.

"It can't be that you blackmail the president," said the consul, "because I understand he boasts he has committed all the known crimes."

"And several he invented," agreed Billy.

"And you can't do it with a gun, because they tell me the president isn't afraid of anything except a voodoo priestess. What is your secret?" coaxed the consul. "If you'll only sell it, I know several Powers that would give you your price."

Billy smiled modestly.

"It's very simple," he said. "The first time my wages were shy I went to the palace and told him if he didn't come across I'd shut off the juice. I think he was so stunned at anybody asking him for real money that while he was still stunned he opened his safe and handed me two thousand francs. I think he did it more in admiration for my nerve than because he owed it. The next time pay-day arrived, and the pay did not, I didn't go

to the palace. I just went to bed, and the lights went to bed, too. You may remember?"

The consul snorted indignantly.

"I was holding three queens at the time," he protested. "Was it *you* did that?"

"It was," said Billy. "The police came for me to start the current going again, but I said I was too ill. Then the president's own doctor came, old Gautier, and Gautier examined me with a lantern and said that in Hayti my disease frequently proved fatal, but he thought if I turned on the lights I might recover. I told him I was tired of life, anyway, but that if I could see three thousand francs it might give me an incentive. He reported back to the president and the three thousand francs arrived almost instantly, and a chicken broth from Ham's own chef, with His Excellency's best wishes for the recovery of the invalid. My recovery was instantaneous, and I switched on the lights.

"I had just moved into the Widow Ducrot's hotel that week, and her daughter Claire wouldn't let me eat the broth. I thought it was because, as she's a dandy cook herself, she was professionally jealous. She put the broth on the top shelf of the pantry and wrote on a piece of paper, 'Gare!' But the next morning a perfectly good

cat, who apparently couldn't read, was lying beside it dead."

The consul frowned reprovingly.

"You should not make such reckless charges," he protested. "I would call it only a coincidence."

"You can call it what you please," said Billy, "but it won't bring the cat back. Anyway, the next time I went to the palace to collect, the president was ready for me. He said he'd been taking out information, and he found if I shut off the lights again he could hire another man in the States to turn them on. I told him he'd been deceived. I told him the Wilmot Electric Lights were produced by a secret process, and that only a trained Wilmot man could work them. And I pointed out to him if he dismissed me it wasn't likely the Wilmot people would loan him another expert; not while they were fighting him through the courts and the State Department. That impressed the old man; so I issued my ultimatum. I said if he must have electric lights he must have me, too. Whether he liked it or not, mine was a life job."

"What did he say to that?" gasped the new consul.

"Said it *wasn't* a life job, because he was going to have me shot at sunset."

"Then you said?"

"I said if he did that there wouldn't be any electric lights, and *you* would bring a warship and shoot Hayti off the map."

The new consul was most indignant.

"You had no right to say that!" he protested. "You did very ill. My instructions are to avoid all serious complications."

"That was what I was trying to avoid," said Billy. "Don't you call being shot at sunset a serious complication? Or would that be just a coincidence, too? You're a hellofa consul!"

Since his talk with the representative of his country four months had passed and Billy still held his job. But each month the number of francs he was able to wrest from President Hamilcar dwindled, and were won only after verbal conflicts that each month increased in violence.

To the foreign colony it became evident that, in the side of President Ham, Billy was a thorn, sharp, irritating, virulent, and that at any moment Ham might pluck that thorn and Billy would leave Hayti in haste, and probably in handcuffs. This was evident to Billy, also, and the prospect was most disquieting. Not because he loved Hayti, but because since he went to lodge at the café of the Widow Ducrot, he had learned

to love her daughter Claire, and Claire loved him.

On the two thousand dollars due him from Ham they plotted to marry. This was not as great an adventure as it might appear. Billy knew that from the Wilmot people he always was sure of a salary, and one which, with such an excellent housekeeper as was Claire, would support them both. But with his two thousand dollars as capital they could afford to plunge; they could go upon a honeymoon; they need not dread a rainy day, and, what was of greatest importance, they need not delay. There was good reason against delay, for the hand of the beautiful Claire was already promised. The Widow Ducrot had promised it to Paillard, he of the prosperous commission business, the prominent *embonpoint*, and four children. Monsieur Paillard possessed an establishment of his own, but it was a villa in the suburbs; and so, each day at noon, for his *déjeûné* he left his office and crossed the street to the Café Ducrot. For five years this had been his habit. At first it was the widow's cooking that attracted him, then for a time the widow herself; but when from the convent Claire came to assist her mother in the café, and when from a lanky, big-eyed, long-legged child she grew into a slim, joyous, and charming young woman, she alone was the

attraction, and the Widower Paillard decided to make her his wife. Other men had made the same decision; and when it was announced that between Claire and the widower a marriage had been "arranged," the clerks in the foreign commission houses and the agents of the steamship lines drowned their sorrow in rum and ran the house flags to half-staff. Paillard himself took the proposed alliance calmly. He was not an impetuous suitor. With Widow Ducrot he agreed that Claire was still too young to marry, and to himself kept the fact that to remarry he was in no haste. In his mind doubts still lingered. With a wife, young enough to be one of his children, disorganizing the routine of his villa, would it be any more comfortable than he now found it? Would his eldest daughter and her stepmother dwell together in harmony? The eldest daughter had assured him that so far as she was concerned they would not; and, after all, in marrying a girl, no matter how charming, without a dot, and the daughter of a boarding-house keeper, no matter how respectable, was he not disposing of himself too cheaply? These doubts assailed Papa Paillard; these speculations were in his mind. And while he speculated Billy acted.

"I know that in France," Billy assured Claire,

"marriages are arranged by the parents; but in *my* country they are arranged in heaven. And who are we to disregard the edicts of heaven? Ages and ages ago, before the flood, before Napoleon, even before old Paillard with his four children, it was arranged in heaven that you were to marry me. So, what little plans your good mother may make don't cut enough ice to cool a green mint. Now, we can't try to get married here," continued Billy, "without your mother and Paillard knowing it. In this town as many people have to sign the marriage contract as signed our Declaration of Independence: all the civil authorities, all the clergy, all the relatives; if every man in the telephone book isn't a witness, the marriage doesn't 'take.' So, we must elope!"

Having been brought up in a convent, where she was taught to obey her mother and forbidden to think of marriage, Claire was naturally delighted with the idea of an elopement.

"To where will we elope to?" she demanded. Her English, as she learned it from Billy, was sometimes confusing.

"To New York," said Billy. "On the voyage there I will put you in charge of the stewardess and the captain; and there isn't a captain on the Royal Dutch or the Atlas that hasn't known you

since you were a baby. And as soon as we dock we'll drive straight to the city hall for a license and the mayor himself will marry us. Then I'll get back my old job from the Wilmot folks and we'll live happy ever after!"

"In New York, also," asked Claire proudly, "are you directeur of the electric lights?"

"On Broadway alone," Billy explained reprovingly, "there is one sign that uses more bulbs than there are in the whole of Hayti!"

"New York is a large town!" exclaimed Claire.

"It's a large sign," corrected Billy. "But," he pointed out, "with no money we'll never see it. So to-morrow I'm going to make a social call on Grandpa Ham and demand my ten thousand francs."

Claire grasped his arm.

"Be careful," she pleaded. "Remember the chicken soup. If he offers you the champagne, refuse it!"

"He won't offer me the champagne," Billy assured her. "It won't be that kind of a call."

Billy left the Café Ducrot and made his way to the water-front. He was expecting some electrical supplies by the *Prinz der Nederlanden*, and she had already come to anchor.

He was late, and save for a group of his coun-

trymen, who with the customs officials were having troubles of their own, the customs shed was all but deserted. Billy saw his freight cleared and was going away when one of those in trouble signalled for assistance.

He was a good-looking young man in a Panama hat and his manner seemed to take it for granted that Billy knew who he was.

"They want us to pay duty on our trunks," he explained, "and we want to leave them in bond. We'll be here only until to-night, when we're going on down the coast to Santo Domingo. But we don't speak French, and we can't make them understand that."

"You don't need to speak any language to give a man ten dollars," said Billy.

"Oh!" exclaimed the man in the Panama. "I was afraid if I tried that they might arrest us."

"They may arrest you if you don't," said Billy.

Acting both as interpreter and disbursing agent, Billy satisfied the demands of his fellow employees of the government, and his fellow countrymen he directed to the Hotel Ducrot.

As some one was sure to take their money, he thought it might as well go to his mother-in-law elect. The young man in the Panama expressed the deepest gratitude, and Billy, assuring him he

would see him later, continued to the power-house, still wondering where he had seen him before.

At the power-house he found seated at his desk a large, bearded stranger whose derby hat and ready-to-wear clothes showed that he also had but just arrived on the *Prinz der Nederlanden.*

"You William Barlow?" demanded the stranger. "I understand you been threatening, unless you get your pay raised, to commit sabotage on these works?"

"Who the devil are you?" inquired Billy.

The stranger produced an impressive-looking document covered with seals.

"Contract with the president," he said. "I've taken over your job. You better get out quiet," he advised, "as they've given me a squad of nigger policemen to see that you do."

"Are you aware that these works are the property of the Wilmot Company?" asked Billy, "and that if anything went wrong here they'd hold you responsible?"

The stranger smiled complacently.

"I've run plants," he said, "that make these lights look like a stable lantern on a foggy night."

"In that case," assented Billy, "should anything happen, you'll know exactly what to do,

and I can leave you in charge without feeling the least anxiety."

"That's just what you can do," the stranger agreed heartily, "and you can't do it too quick!" From the desk he took Billy's favorite pipe and loaded it from Billy's tobacco-jar. But when Billy had reached the door he called to him. "Before you go, son," he said, "you might give me a tip about this climate. I never been in the tropics. It's kind of unhealthy, ain't it?"

His expression was one of concern.

"If you hope to keep alive," began Billy, "there are two things to avoid——"

The stranger laughed knowingly.

"I got you!" he interrupted. "You're going to tell me to cut out wine and women."

"I was going to tell you," said Billy, "to cut out hoping to collect any wages and to avoid every kind of soup."

From the power-house Billy went direct to the palace. His anxiety was great. Now that Claire had consented to leave Hayti, the loss of his position did not distress him. But the possible loss of his back pay would be a catastrophe. He had hardly enough money to take them both to New York, and after they arrived none with which to keep them alive. Before the Wilmot Company

could find a place for him a month might pass, and during that month they might starve. If he went alone and arranged for Claire to follow, he might lose her. Her mother might marry her to Paillard; Claire might fall ill; without him at her elbow to keep her to their purpose the voyage to an unknown land might require more courage than she possessed. Billy saw it was imperative they should depart together, and to that end he must have his two thousand dollars. The money was justly his. For it he had sweated and slaved; had given his best effort. And so, when he faced the president, he was in no conciliatory mood. Neither was the president.

By what right, he demanded, did this foreigner affront his ears with demands for money; how dared he force his way into his presence and to his face babble of back pay? It was insolent, incredible. With indignation the president set forth the position of the government. Billy had been discharged and, with the appointment of his successor, the stranger in the derby hat, had ceased to exist. The government could not pay money to some one who did not exist. All indebtedness to Billy also had ceased to exist. The account had been wiped out. Billy had been wiped out.

The big negro, with the chest and head of a

gorilla, tossed his kinky white curls so violently that the ringlets danced. Billy, he declared, had been a pest; a fly that buzzed and buzzed and disturbed his slumbers. And now when the fly thought he slept he had caught and crushed it —so. President Ham clinched his great fist convulsively and, with delight in his pantomime, opened his fingers one by one, and held out his pink palm, wrinkled and crossed like the hand of a washerwoman, as though to show Billy that in it lay the fly, dead.

"*C'est une chose jugée!*" thundered the president.

He reached for his quill pen.

But Billy, with Claire in his heart, with the injustice of it rankling in his mind, did not agree.

"It is not an affair closed," shouted Billy in his best French. "It is an affair international, diplomatic; a cause for war!"

Believing he had gone mad, President Ham gazed at him speechless.

"From here I go to the cable office," shouted Billy. "I cable for a warship! If, by to-night, I am not paid my money, marines will surround our power-house, and the Wilmot people will back me up, and my government will back me up!"

It was, so Billy thought, even as he launched it,

a tirade satisfying and magnificent. But in his turn the president did not agree.

He rose. He was a large man. Billy wondered he had not previously noticed how very large he was.

"To-night at nine o'clock," he said, "the German boat departs for New York." As though aiming a pistol, he raised his arm and at Billy pointed a finger. "If, after she departs, you are found in Port-au-Prince, you will be shot!"

The audience-chamber was hung with great mirrors in frames of tarnished gilt. In these Billy saw himself reproduced in a wavering line of Billies that, like the ghost of Banquo, stretched to the disappearing point. Of such images there was an army, but of the real Billy, as he was acutely conscious, there was but one. Among the black faces scowling from the doorways he felt the odds were against him. Without making a reply he passed out between the racks of rusty muskets in the anteroom, between the two Gatling guns guarding the entrance, and on the palace steps, in indecision, halted.

As Billy hesitated an officer followed him from the palace and beckoned to the guard that sat in the bare dust of the Champ de Mars playing cards for cartridges. Two abandoned the game, and,

having received their orders, picked their muskets from the dust and stood looking expectantly at Billy.

They were his escort, and it was evident that until nine o'clock, when he sailed, his movements would be spied upon; his acts reported to the president.

Such being the situation, Billy determined that his first act to be reported should be of a nature to cause the president active mental anguish. With his guard at his heels he went directly to the cable station, and to the Secretary of State of the United States addressed this message: "President refuses my pay; threatens shoot; wireless nearest war-ship proceed here full speed. William Barlow."

Billy and the director of telegraphs, who out of office hours was a field-marshal, and when not in his shirt-sleeves always appeared in uniform, went over each word of the cablegram together. When Billy was assured that the field-marshal had grasped the full significance of it he took it back and added, "Love to Aunt Maria." The extra words cost four dollars and eighty cents gold, but, as they suggested ties of blood between himself and the Secretary of State, they seemed advisable. In the account-book in which he recorded

his daily expenditures Billy credited the item to "life-insurance."

The revised cablegram caused the field-marshal deep concern. He frowned at Billy ferociously.

"I will forward this at once," he promised. "But, I warn you," he added, "I deliver also a copy to *my* president!"

Billy sighed hopefully.

"You might deliver the copy first," he suggested.

From the cable station Billy, still accompanied by his faithful retainers, returned to the power-house. There he bade farewell to the black brothers who had been his assistants, and upon one of them pressed a sum of money.

As they parted, this one, as though giving the pass-word of a secret society, chanted solemnly:

"*A huit heures juste!*"

And Billy clasped his hand and nodded.

At the office of the Royal Dutch West India Line Billy purchased a ticket to New York and inquired were there many passengers.

"The ship is empty," said the agent.

"I am glad," said Billy, "for one of my assistants may come with me. He also is being deported."

"You can have as many cabins as you want," said the agent. "We are so sorry to see you go that we will try to make you feel you leave us on your private yacht."

The next two hours Billy spent in seeking out those acquaintances from whom he could borrow money. He found that by asking for it in homœopathic doses he was able to shame the foreign colony into loaning him all of one hundred dollars. This, with what he had in hand, would take Claire and himself to New York and for a week keep them alive. After that he must find work or they must starve.

In the garden of the Café Ducrot Billy placed his guard at a table with bottles of beer between them, and at an adjoining table with Claire plotted the elopement for that night. The garden was in the rear of the hotel and a door in the lower wall opened into the rue Cambon, that led directly to the water-front.

Billy proposed that at eight o'clock Claire should be waiting in the rue Cambon outside this door. They would then make their way to one of the less frequented wharfs, where Claire would arrange to have a rowboat in readiness, and in it they would take refuge on the steamer. An hour later, before the flight of Claire could be discovered,

they would have started on their voyage to the mainland.

"I warn you," said Billy, "that after we reach New York I have only enough to keep us for a week. It will be a brief honeymoon. After that we will probably starve. I'm not telling you this to discourage you," he explained; "only trying to be honest."

"I would rather starve with you in New York," said Claire, "than die here without you."

At these words Billy desired greatly to kiss Claire, but the guards were scowling at him. It was not until Claire had gone to her room to pack her bag and the chance to kiss her had passed that Billy recognized that the scowls were intended to convey the fact that the beer bottles were empty. He remedied this and remained alone at his table considering the outlook. The horizon was, indeed, gloomy, and the only light upon it, the loyalty and love of the girl, only added to his bitterness. Above all things he desired to make her content, to protect her from disquiet, to convince her that in the sacrifice she was making she also was plotting her own happiness. Had he been able to collect his ten thousand francs his world would have danced in sunshine. As it was, the heavens were gray and for the future the skies promised

only rainy days. In these depressing reflections Billy was interrupted by the approach of the young man in the Panama hat. Billy would have avoided him, but the young man and his two friends would not be denied. For the service Billy had rendered them they wished to express their gratitude. It found expression in the form of Planter's punch. As they consumed this Billy explained to the strangers why the customs men had detained them.

"You told them you were leaving to-night for Santo Domingo," said Billy; "but they knew that was impossible, for there is no steamer down the coast for two weeks."

The one whose features seemed familiar replied:

"Still, we *are* leaving to-night," he said; "not on a steamer, but on a war-ship."

"A war-ship?" cried Billy. His heart beat at high speed. "Then," he exclaimed, "you are a naval officer?"

The young man shook his head and, as though challenging Billy to make another guess, smiled.

"Then," Billy complied eagerly, "you are a diplomat! Are you our new minister?"

One of the other young men exclaimed reproachfully:

"You know him perfectly well!" he protested. "You've seen his picture thousands of times."

With awe and pride he placed his hand on Billy's arm and with the other pointed at the one in the Panama hat.

"It's Harry St. Clair," he announced. "Harry St. Clair, the King of the Movies!"

"The King of the Movies," repeated Billy. His disappointment was so keen as to be embarrassing.

"Oh!" he exclaimed, "I thought you—" Then he remembered his manners. "Glad to meet you," he said. "Seen you on the screen."

Again his own troubles took precedence. "Did you say," he demanded, "one of our war-ships is coming here *to-day?*"

"Coming to take me to Santo Domingo," explained Mr. St. Clair. He spoke airily, as though to him as a means of locomotion battle-ships were as trolley-cars. The Planter's punch, which was something he had never before encountered, encouraged the great young man to unbend. He explained further and fully, and Billy, his mind intent upon his own affair, pretended to listen.

The United States Government, Mr. St. Clair explained, was assisting him and the Apollo Film

Company in producing the eight-reel film entitled "The Man Behind the Gun."

With it the Navy Department plotted to advertise the navy and encourage recruiting. In moving pictures, in the form of a story, with love interest, villain, comic relief, and thrills, it would show the life of American bluejackets afloat and ashore, at home and abroad. They would be seen at Yokohama playing baseball with Tokio University; in the courtyard of the Vatican receiving the blessing of the Pope; at Waikiki riding the breakers on a scrubbing-board; in the Philippines eating cocoanuts in the shade of the sheltering palm, and in Brooklyn in the Y. M. C. A. club, in the shadow of the New York sky-scrapers, playing billiards and reading the sporting extras.

As it would be illustrated on the film the life of "The Man Behind the Gun" was one of luxurious ease. In it coal-passing, standing watch in a blizzard, and washing down decks, cold and unsympathetic, held no part. But to prove that the life of Jack was not all play he would be seen fighting for the flag. That was where, as "Lieutenant Hardy, U. S. A.," the King of the Movies entered.

"Our company arrived in Santo Domingo last week," he explained. "And they're waiting for me now. I'm to lead the attack on the fortress. We

land in shore boats under the guns of the ship and I take the fortress. First, we show the ship clearing for action and the men lowering the boats and pulling for shore. Then we cut back to show the gun-crews serving the guns. Then we jump to the landing-party wading through the breakers. I lead them. The man who is carrying the flag gets shot and drops in the surf. I pick him up, put him on my shoulder, and carry him *and* the flag to the beach, where I——"

Billy suddenly awoke. His tone was one of excited interest.

"You got a uniform?" he demanded.

"Three," said St. Clair impressively, "made to order according to regulations on file in the Quartermaster's Department. Each absolutely correct." Without too great a show of eagerness he inquired: "Like to see them?"

Without too great a show of eagerness Billy assured him that he would.

"I got to telephone first," he added, "but by the time you get your trunk open I'll join you in your room."

In the café, over the telephone, Billy addressed himself to the field-marshal in charge of the cable office. When Billy gave his name, the voice of that dignitary became violently agitated.

"Monsieur Barlow," he demanded, "do you know that the warship for which you cabled your Secretary of State makes herself to arrive?"

At the other end of the 'phone, although restrained by the confines of the booth, Billy danced joyously. But his voice was stern.

"Naturally," he replied. "Where is she now?"

An hour before, so the field-marshal informed him, the battleship *Louisiana* had been sighted and by telegraph reported. She was approaching under forced draught. At any moment she might anchor in the outer harbor. Of this President Ham had been informed. He was grieved, indignant; he was also at a loss to understand.

"It is very simple," explained Billy. "She probably was somewhere in the Windward Passage. When the Secretary got my message he cabled Guantanamo, and Guantanamo wirelessed the warship nearest Port-au-Prince."

"President Poussevain," warned the field-marshal, "is greatly disturbed."

"Tell him not to worry," said Billy. "Tell him when the bombardment begins I will see that the palace is outside the zone of fire."

As Billy entered the room of St. Clair his eyes shone with a strange light. His manner, which

toward a man of his repute St. Clair had considered a little too casual, was now enthusiastic, almost affectionate.

"My dear St. Clair," cried Billy, "*I've fixed it!* But, until I was *sure*, I didn't want to raise your hopes!"

"Hopes of what?" demanded the actor.

"An audience with the president!" cried Billy. "I've just called him up and he says I'm to bring you to the palace at once. He's heard of you, of course, and he's very pleased to meet you. I told him about 'The Man Behind the Gun,' and he says you must come in your make-up as 'Lieutenant Hardy, U. S. A.,' just as he'll see you on the screen."

Mr. St. Clair stammered delightedly.

"In uniform," he protested; "won't that be ——"

"White, special full dress," insisted Billy. "Medals, side-arms, full-dress belt, *and* gloves. What a press story! 'The King of the Movies meets the President of Hayti!' Of course, he's only an ignorant negro, but on Broadway they don't know that; and it will sound fine!"

St. Clair coughed nervously.

"*Don't* forget," he stammered, "I can't speak French, or understand it, either."

The eyes of Billy became as innocent as those of a china doll.

"Then I'll interpret," he said. "And, oh, yes," he added, "he's sending two of the palace soldiers to act as an escort—sort of guard of honor!"

The King of the Movies chuckled excitedly.

"Fine!" he exclaimed. "You *are* a brick!"

With trembling fingers he began to shed his outer garments.

To hide his own agitation Billy walked to the window and turned his back. Night had fallen and the electric lights, that once had been his care, sprang into life. Billy looked at his watch. It was seven o'clock. The window gave upon the harbor, and a mile from shore he saw the cargo lights of the *Prinz der Nederlanden*, and slowly approaching, as though feeling for her berth, a great battleship. When Billy turned from the window his voice was apparently undisturbed.

"We've got to hurry," he said. "The *Louisiana* is standing in. She'll soon be sending a launch for you. We've just time to drive to the palace and back before the launch gets here."

From his mind President Ham had dismissed all thoughts of the warship that had been sighted and that now had come to anchor. For the moment he was otherwise concerned. Fate could not harm him; he was about to dine.

But, for the first time in the history of his administration, that solemn ceremony was rudely halted. An excited aide, trembling at his own temerity, burst upon the president's solitary state.

In the anteroom, he announced, an officer from the battleship *Louisiana* demanded instant audience.

For a moment, transfixed in amazement, anger, and alarm President Ham remained seated. Such a visit, uninvited, was against all tradition; it was an affront, an insult. But that it was against all precedent argued some serious necessity. He decided it would be best to receive the officer. Besides, to continue his dinner was now out of the question. Both appetite and digestion had fled from him.

In the anteroom Billy was whispering final instructions to St. Clair.

"Whatever happens," he begged, "don't *laugh!* Don't even smile politely! He's very ignorant, you see, and he's sensitive. When he meets foreigners and can't understand their language, he's always afraid if they laugh that he's made a break and that they're laughing at *him.* So, be solemn; look grave; look haughty!"

"I got you," assented St. Clair. "I'm to 'register' pride."

"Exactly!" said Billy. "The more pride you register, the better for us."

Inwardly cold with alarm, outwardly frigidly polite, Billy presented "Lieutenant Hardy." He had come, Billy explained, in answer to the call for help sent by himself to the Secretary of State, which by wireless had been communicated to the *Louisiana*. Lieutenant Hardy begged him to say to the president that he was desolate at having to approach His Excellency so unceremoniously. But His Excellency, having threatened the life of an American citizen, the captain of the *Louisiana* was forced to act quickly.

"And this officer?" demanded President Ham; "what does he want?"

"He says," Billy translated to St. Clair, "that he is very glad to meet you, and he wants to know how much you earn a week."

The actor suppressed his surprise and with pardonable pride said that his salary was six hundred dollars a week and royalties on each film.

Billy bowed to the president.

"He says," translated Billy, "he is here to see that I get my ten thousand francs, and that if I don't get them in ten minutes he will return to the ship and land marines."

To St. Clair it seemed as though the president received his statement as to the amount of his salary with a disapproval that was hardly flattering. With the heel of his giant fist the president beat upon the table, his curls shook, his gorilla-like shoulders heaved.

In an explanatory aside Billy made this clear.

"He says," he interpreted, "that you get more as an actor than he gets as president, and it makes him mad."

"I can see it does myself," whispered St. Clair. "And I don't understand French, either."

President Ham was protesting violently. It was outrageous, he exclaimed; it was inconceivable that a great republic should shake the Big Stick over the head of a small republic, and for a contemptible ten thousand francs.

"I will not believe," he growled, "that this officer has authority to threaten me. You have deceived him. If he knew the truth, he would apologize. Tell him," he roared suddenly, "that I *demand* that he apologize!"

Billy felt like the man who, after jauntily forcing the fighting, unexpectedly gets a jolt on the chin that drops him to the canvas.

While the referee might have counted three Billy remained upon the canvas.

Then again he forced the fighting. Eagerly he turned to St. Clair.

"He says," he translated, "you must recite something."

St. Clair exclaimed incredulously:

"Recite!" he gasped.

Than his indignant protest nothing could have been more appropriate.

"Wants to see you act out," insisted Billy. "Go on," he begged; "humor him. Do what he wants or he'll put us in jail!"

"But what shall I——"

"He wants the curse of Rome from Richelieu," explained Billy. "He knows it in French and he wants you to recite it in English. Do you know it?"

The actor smiled haughtily.

"I *wrote* it!" he protested. "Richelieu's my middle name. I've done it in stock."

"Then do it now!" commanded Billy. "Give it to him hot. I'm Julie de Mortemar. He's the villain Barabas. Begin where Barabas hands you the cue, 'The country is the king!'"

In embarrassment St. Clair coughed tentatively.

"Whoever heard of Cardinal Richelieu," he protested, "in a navy uniform?"

"Begin!" begged Billy.

"What'll I do with my cap?" whispered St. Clair.

In an ecstasy of alarm Billy danced from foot to foot.

"I'll hold your cap," he cried. "Go on!"

St. Clair gave his cap of gold braid to Billy and shifted his "full-dress" sword-belt. Not without concern did President Ham observe these preparations. For the fraction of a second, in alarm, his eyes glanced to the exits. He found that the officers of his staff completely filled them. Their presence gave him confidence and his eyes returned to Lieutenant Hardy.

That gentleman heaved a deep sigh. Dejectedly, his head fell forward until his chin rested upon his chest. Much to the relief of the president, it appeared evident that Lieutenant Hardy was about to accede to his command and apologize.

St. Clair groaned heavily.

"Ay, is it so?" he muttered. His voice was deep, resonant, vibrating like a bell. His eyes no longer suggested apology. They were strange, flashing; the eyes of a religious fanatic; and balefully they were fixed upon President Ham.

"Then wakes the power," the deep voice rumbled, "that in the age of iron burst forth to curb

the great and raise the low." He flung out his left arm and pointed it at Billy.

"Mark where she stands!" he commanded.

With a sweeping, protecting gesture he drew around Billy an imaginary circle. The pantomime was only too clear. To the aged negro, who feared neither God nor man, but only voodoo, there was in the voice and gesture that which caused his blood to chill.

"Around her form," shrieked St. Clair, "I draw the awful circle of our solemn church! Set but one foot within that holy ground and on thy head—" Like a semaphore the left arm dropped, and the right arm, with the forefinger pointed, shot out at President Ham. "Yea, though it wore a CROWN—I launch the CURSE OF ROME!"

No one moved. No one spoke. What terrible threat had hit him President Ham could not guess. He did not ask. Stiffly, like a man in a trance, he turned to the rusty iron safe behind his chair and spun the handle. When again he faced them he held a long envelope which he presented to Billy.

"There are the ten thousand francs," he said. "Ask him if he is satisfied, and demand that he go at once!"

Billy turned to St. Clair.

"He says," translated Billy, "he's very much obliged and hopes we will come again. Now," commanded Billy, "bow low and go out facing him. We don't want him to shoot us in the back!"

Bowing to the president, the actor threw at Billy a glance full of indignation.

"Was I as bad as *that?*" he demanded.

On schedule time Billy drove up to the Hotel Ducrot and relinquished St. Clair to the ensign in charge of the launch from the *Louisiana.* At sight of St. Clair in the regalia of a superior officer, that young gentleman showed his surprise.

"I've been giving a 'command' performance for the president," explained the actor modestly. "I recited for him, and, though I spoke in English, I think I made quite a hit."

"You certainly," Billy assured him gratefully, "made a terrible hit with me."

As the moving-picture actors, escorted by the ensign, followed their trunks to the launch, Billy looked after them with a feeling of great loneliness. He was aware that from the palace his carriage had been followed; that drawn in a cordon around the hotel negro policemen covertly observed him. That President Ham still hoped to recover his lost prestige and his lost money was only too evident.

It was just five minutes to eight.

Billy ran to his room, and with his suitcase in his hand slipped down the back stairs and into the garden. Cautiously he made his way to the gate in the wall, and in the street outside found Claire awaiting him.

With a cry of relief she clasped his arm.

"You are safe!" she cried. "I was so frightened for you. That President Ham, he is a beast, an ogre!" Her voice sank to a whisper. "And for myself also I have been frightened. The police, they are at each corner. They watch the hotel. They watch *me!* Why? What do they want?"

"They want something of mine," said Billy. "But I can't tell you what it is until I'm sure it *is* mine. Is the boat at the wharf?"

"All is arranged," Claire assured him. "The boatmen are our friends; they will take us safely to the steamer."

With a sigh of relief Billy lifted her valise and his own, but he did not move forward.

Anxiously Claire pulled at his sleeve.

"Come!" she begged. "For what it is that you wait?"

It was just eight o'clock.

Billy was looking up at the single electric-light

bulb that lit the narrow street, and following the direction of his eyes, Claire saw the light grow dim, saw the tiny wires grow red, and disappear. From over all the city came shouts, and cries of consternation, oaths, and laughter, and then darkness.

"I was waiting for *this!*" cried Billy.

With the delight of a mischievous child Claire laughed aloud.

"*You*—you did it!" she accused.

"I did!" said Billy. "And now—we must run like the devil!"

The *Prinz der Nederlanden* was drawing slowly out of the harbor. Shoulder to shoulder Claire and Billy leaned upon the rail. On the wharfs of Port-au-Prince they saw lanterns tossing and candles twinkling; saw the *Louisiana*, blazing like a Christmas-tree, steaming majestically south; in each other's eyes saw that all was well.

From his pocket Billy drew a long envelope.

"I can now with certainty," said Billy, "state that this is mine—*ours*."

He opened the envelope, and while Claire gazed upon many mille franc notes Billy told how he had retrieved them.

"But what danger!" cried Claire. "In time Ham would have paid. Your president at Wash-

ington would have *made* him pay. Why take such risks? You had but to wait!"

Billy smiled contentedly.

"Dear one!" he exclaimed, "the policy of watchful waiting is safer, but the Big Stick acts quicker and gets results!"

THE BOY SCOUT

THE BOY SCOUT

A RULE of the Boy Scouts is every day to do some one a good turn. Not because the copy-books tell you it deserves another, but in spite of that pleasing possibility. If you are a true scout, until you have performed your act of kindness your day is dark. You are as unhappy as is the grown-up who has begun his day without shaving or reading the New York *Sun*. But as soon as you have proved yourself you may, with a clear conscience, look the world in the face and untie the knot in your kerchief.

Jimmie Reeder untied the accusing knot in his scarf at just ten minutes past eight on a hot August morning after he had given one dime to his sister Sadie. With that she could either witness the first-run films at the Palace, or by dividing her fortune patronize two of the nickel shows on Lenox Avenue. The choice Jimmie left to her. He was setting out for the annual encampment of the Boy Scouts at Hunter's Island, and in the excitement of that adventure even the movies ceased to thrill. But Sadie also could be

unselfish. With a heroism of a camp-fire maiden she made a gesture which might have been interpreted to mean she was returning the money.

"I can't, Jimmie!" she gasped. "I can't take it off you. You saved it, and you ought to get the fun of it."

"I haven't saved it yet," said Jimmie. "I'm going to cut it out of the railroad fare. I'm going to get off at City Island instead of at Pelham Manor and walk the difference. That's ten cents cheaper."

Sadie exclaimed with admiration:

"An' you carryin' that heavy grip!"

"Aw, that's nothin'," said the man of the family.

"Good-by, mother. So long, Sadie."

To ward off further expressions of gratitude he hurriedly advised Sadie to take in "The Curse of Cain" rather than "The Mohawk's Last Stand," and fled down the front steps.

He wore his khaki uniform. On his shoulders was his knapsack, from his hands swung his suitcase, and between his heavy stockings and his "shorts" his kneecaps, unkissed by the sun, as yet unscathed by blackberry vines, showed as white and fragile as the wrists of a girl. As he moved toward the "L" station at the corner,

Sadie and his mother waved to him; in the street, boys too small to be Scouts hailed him enviously; even the policeman glancing over the newspapers on the news-stand nodded approval.

"You a Scout, Jimmie?" he asked.

"No," retorted Jimmie, for was not he also in uniform? "I'm Santa Claus out filling Christmas stockings."

The patrolman also possessed a ready wit.

"Then get yourself a pair," he advised. "If a dog was to see your legs——"

Jimmie escaped the insult by fleeing up the steps of the Elevated.

An hour later, with his valise in one hand and staff in the other, he was tramping up the Boston Post Road and breathing heavily. The day was cruelly hot. Before his eyes, over an interminable stretch of asphalt, the heat waves danced and flickered. Already the knapsack on his shoulders pressed upon him like an Old Man of the Sea; the linen in the valise had turned to pig iron, his pipe-stem legs were wabbling, his eyes smarted with salt sweat, and the fingers supporting the valise belonged to some other boy, and were giving that boy much pain. But as the motor-cars flashed past with raucous warn-

ings, or, that those who rode might better see the boy with bare knees, passed at "half speed," Jimmie stiffened his shoulders and stepped jauntily forward. Even when the joy-riders mocked with "Oh, you Scout!" he smiled at them. He was willing to admit to those who rode that the laugh was on the one who walked. And he regretted—oh, so bitterly—having left the train. He was indignant that for his "one good turn a day" he had not selected one less strenuous—that, for instance, he had not assisted a frightened old lady through the traffic. To refuse the dime she might have offered, as all true scouts refuse all tips, would have been easier than to earn it by walking five miles, with the sun at ninety-nine degrees, and carrying excess baggage. Twenty times James shifted the valise to the other hand, twenty times he let it drop and sat upon it.

And then, as again he took up his burden, the good Samaritan drew near. He drew near in a low gray racing-car at the rate of forty miles an hour, and within a hundred feet of Jimmie suddenly stopped and backed toward him. The good Samaritan was a young man with white hair. He wore a suit of blue, a golf cap; the hands that held the wheel were disguised in large yel-

low gloves. He brought the car to a halt and surveyed the dripping figure in the road with tired and uncurious eyes.

"You a Boy Scout?" he asked.

With alacrity for the twenty-first time Jimmie dropped the valise, forced his cramped fingers into straight lines, and saluted.

The young man in the car nodded toward the seat beside him.

"Get in," he commanded.

When James sat panting happily at his elbow the old young man, to Jimmie's disappointment, did not continue to shatter the speed limit. Instead, he seemed inclined for conversation, and the car, growling indignantly, crawled.

"I never saw a Boy Scout before," announced the old young man. "Tell me about it. First, tell me what you do when you're not scouting."

Jimmie explained volubly. When not in uniform he was an office boy, and from peddlers and beggars guarded the gates of Carroll and Hastings, stock-brokers. He spoke the names of his employers with awe. It was a firm distinguished, conservative, and long established. The white-haired young man seemed to nod in assent.

"Do you know them?" demanded Jimmie suspiciously. "Are you a customer of ours?"

"I know them," said the young man. "They are customers of mine."

Jimmie wondered in what way Carroll and Hastings were customers of the white-haired young man. Judging him by his outer garments, Jimmie guessed he was a Fifth Avenue tailor; he might be even a haberdasher. Jimmie continued. He lived, he explained, with his mother at One Hundred and Forty-sixth Street; Sadie, his sister, attended the public school; he helped support them both, and he now was about to enjoy a well-earned vacation camping out on Hunter's Island, where he would cook his own meals, and, if the mosquitoes permitted, sleep in a tent.

"And you like that?" demanded the young man. "You call that fun?"

"Sure!" protested Jimmie. "Don't *you* go camping out?"

"I go camping out," said the good Samaritan, "whenever I leave New York."

Jimmie had not for three years lived in Wall Street not to understand that the young man spoke in metaphor.

"You don't look," objected the young man critically, "as though you were built for the strenuous life."

Jimmie glanced guiltily at his white knees.

"You ought ter see me two weeks from now," he protested. "I get all sunburnt and hard—hard as anything!"

The young man was incredulous.

"You were near getting sunstruck when I picked you up," he laughed. "If you're going to Hunter's Island, why didn't you go to Pelham Manor?"

"That's right!" assented Jimmie eagerly. "But I wanted to save the ten cents so's to send Sadie to the movies. So I walked."

The young man looked his embarrassment.

"I beg your pardon," he murmured.

But Jimmie did not hear him. From the back of the car he was dragging excitedly at the hated suitcase.

"Stop!" he commanded. "I got ter get out. I got ter *walk*."

The young man showed his surprise.

"Walk!" he exclaimed. "What is it—a bet?"

Jimmie dropped the valise and followed it into the roadway. It took some time to explain to the young man. First, he had to be told about the Scout law and the one good turn a day, and that it must involve some personal sacrifice. And, as Jimmie pointed out, changing from a slow suburban train to a racing-car could not be

listed as a sacrifice. He had not earned the money, Jimmie argued; he had only avoided paying it to the railroad. If he did not walk he would be obtaining the gratitude of Sadie by a falsehood. Therefore, he must walk.

"Not at all," protested the young man. "You've got it wrong. What good will it do your sister to have you sunstruck? I think you *are* sunstruck. You're crazy with the heat. You get in here, and we'll talk it over as we go along."

Hastily Jimmie backed away. "I'd rather walk," he said.

The young man shifted his legs irritably.

"Then how'll this suit you?" he called. "We'll declare that first 'one good turn' a failure and start afresh. Do *me* a good turn."

Jimmie halted in his tracks and looked back suspiciously.

"I'm going to Hunter's Island Inn," called the young man, "and I've lost my way. You get in here and guide me. That'll be doing me a good turn."

On either side of the road, blotting out the landscape, giant hands picked out in electric-light bulbs pointed the way to Hunter's Island Inn. Jimmie grinned and nodded toward them.

"Much obliged," he called. "I got ter walk."

Turning his back upon temptation, he waddled forward into the flickering heat waves.

The young man did not attempt to pursue. At the side of the road, under the shade of a giant elm, he had brought the car to a halt and with his arms crossed upon the wheel sat motionless, following with frowning eyes the retreating figure of Jimmie. But the narrow-chested and knock-kneed boy staggering over the sun-baked asphalt no longer concerned him. It was not Jimmie, but the code preached by Jimmie, and not only preached but before his eyes put into practise, that interested him. The young man with white hair had been running away from temptation. At forty miles an hour he had been running away from the temptation to do a fellow mortal "a good turn." That morning, to the appeal of a drowning Cæsar to "Help me, Cassius, or I sink," he had answered: "Sink!" That answer he had no wish to reconsider. That he might not reconsider he had sought to escape. It was his experience that a sixty-horse-power racing-machine is a jealous mistress. For retrospective, sentimental, or philanthropic thoughts she grants no leave of absence. But he had not escaped. Jimmie had halted him, tripped

him by the heels, and set him again to thinking. Within the half-hour that followed those who rolled past saw at the side of the road a car with her engine running, and leaning upon the wheel, as unconscious of his surroundings as though he sat at his own fireplace, a young man who frowned and stared at nothing. The half-hour passed and the young man swung his car back toward the city. But at the first road-house that showed a blue-and-white telephone sign he left it, and into the iron box at the end of the bar dropped a nickel. He wished to communicate with Mr. Carroll, of Carroll and Hastings; and when he learned Mr. Carroll had just issued orders that he must not be disturbed, the young man gave his name.

The effect upon the barkeeper was instantaneous. With the aggrieved air of one who feels he is the victim of a jest he laughed scornfully.

"What are you putting over?" he demanded.

The young man smiled reassuringly. He had begun to speak and, though apparently engaged with the beer-glass he was polishing, the barkeeper listened.

Down in Wall Street the senior member of Carroll and Hastings also listened. He was alone

in the most private of all his private offices, and when interrupted had been engaged in what, of all undertakings, is the most momentous. On the desk before him lay letters to his lawyer, to the coroner, to his wife; and hidden by a mass of papers, but within reach of his hand, was an automatic pistol. The promise it offered of swift release had made the writing of the letters simple, had given him a feeling of complete detachment, had released him, at least in thought, from all responsibilities. And when at his elbow the telephone coughed discreetly, it was as though some one had called him from a world from which already he had made his exit.

Mechanically, through mere habit, he lifted the receiver.

The voice over the telephone came in brisk, staccato sentences.

"That letter I sent this morning? Forget it. Tear it up. I've been thinking and I'm going to take a chance. I've decided to back you boys, and I know you'll make good. I'm speaking from a road-house in the Bronx; going straight from here to the bank. So you can begin to draw against us within an hour. And—hello!—will three millions see you through?"

From Wall Street there came no answer, but

from the hands of the barkeeper a glass crashed to the floor.

The young man regarded the barkeeper with puzzled eyes.

"He doesn't answer," he exclaimed. "He must have hung up."

"He must have fainted!" said the barkeeper.

The white-haired one pushed a bill across the counter. "To pay for breakage," he said, and disappeared down Pelham Parkway.

Throughout the day, with the bill, for evidence, pasted against the mirror, the barkeeper told and retold the wondrous tale.

"He stood just where you're standing now," he related, "blowing in million-dollar bills like you'd blow suds off a beer. If I'd knowed it was *him*, I'd have hit him once and hid him in the cellar for the reward. Who'd I think he was? I thought he was a wire-tapper, working a con game!"

Mr. Carroll had not "hung up," but when in the Bronx the beer-glass crashed, in Wall Street the receiver had slipped from the hand of the man who held it, and the man himself had fallen forward. His desk hit him in the face and woke him—woke him to the wonderful fact that he still lived; that at forty he had been born again;

that before him stretched many more years in which, as the young man with the white hair had pointed out, he still could make good.

The afternoon was far advanced when the staff of Carroll and Hastings were allowed to depart, and, even late as was the hour, two of them were asked to remain. Into the most private of the private offices Carroll invited Gaskell, the head clerk; in the main office Hastings had asked young Thorne, the bond clerk, to be seated.

Until the senior partner has finished with Gaskell young Thorne must remain seated.

"Gaskell," said Mr. Carroll, "if we had listened to you, if we'd run this place as it was when father was alive, this never would have happened. It *hasn't* happened, but we've had our lesson. And after this we're going slow and going straight. And we don't need you to tell us how to do that. We want you to go away—on a month's vacation. When I thought we were going under I planned to send the children on a sea voyage with the governess—so they wouldn't see the newspapers. But now that I can look them in the eye again, I need them, I can't let them go. So, if you'd like to take your wife on an ocean trip to Nova Scotia and Quebec, here are the cabins I reserved

for the kids. They call it the royal suite—whatever that is—and the trip lasts a month. The boat sails to-morrow morning. Don't sleep too late or you may miss her."

The head clerk was secreting the tickets in the inside pocket of his waistcoat. His fingers trembled, and when he laughed his voice trembled.

"Miss the boat!" the head clerk exclaimed. "If she gets away from Millie and me she's got to start now. We'll go on board to-night!"

A half-hour later Millie was on her knees packing a trunk, and her husband was telephoning to the drug-store for a sponge-bag and a cure for seasickness.

Owing to the joy in her heart and to the fact that she was on her knees, Millie was alternately weeping into the trunk-tray and offering up incoherent prayers of thanksgiving. Suddenly she sank back upon the floor.

"John!" she cried, "doesn't it seem sinful to sail away in a 'royal suite' and leave this beautiful flat empty?"

Over the telephone John was having trouble with the drug clerk.

"No!" he explained, "I'm not seasick *now*. The medicine I want is to be taken later. I

know I'm speaking from the Pavonia; but the Pavonia isn't a ship; it's an apartment-house."

He turned to Millie. "We can't be in two places at the same time," he suggested.

"But, think," insisted Millie, "of all the poor people stifling to-night in this heat, trying to sleep on the roofs and fire-escapes; and our flat so cool and big and pretty—and no one in it."

John nodded his head proudly.

"I know it's big," he said, "but it isn't big enough to hold all the people who are sleeping to-night on the roofs and in the parks."

"I was thinking of your brother—and Grace," said Millie. "They've been married only two weeks now, and they're in a stuffy hall bedroom and eating with all the other boarders. Think what our flat would mean to them; to be by themselves, with eight rooms and their own kitchen and bath, and our new refrigerator and the gramophone! It would be heaven! It would be a real honeymoon!"

Abandoning the drug clerk, John lifted Millie in his arms and kissed her, for, next to his wife, nearest his heart was the younger brother.

The younger brother and Grace were sitting on the stoop of the boarding-house. On the upper

steps, in their shirt-sleeves, were the other boarders; so the bride and bridegroom spoke in whispers. The air of the cross street was stale and stagnant; from it rose exhalations of rotting fruit, the gases of an open subway, the smoke of passing taxicabs. But between the street and the hall bedroom, with its odors of a gas-stove and a kitchen, the choice was difficult.

"We've got to cool off somehow," the young husband was saying, "or you won't sleep. Shall we treat ourselves to ice-cream sodas or a trip on the Weehawken ferry-boat?"

"The ferry-boat!" begged the girl, "where we can get away from all these people."

A taxicab with a trunk in front whirled into the street, kicked itself to a stop, and the head clerk and Millie spilled out upon the pavement. They talked so fast, and the younger brother and Grace talked so fast, that the boarders, although they listened intently, could make nothing of it.

They distinguished only the concluding sentences:

"Why don't you drive down to the wharf with us," they heard the elder brother ask, "and see our royal suite?"

But the younger brother laughed him to scorn.

"What's your royal suite," he mocked, "to our royal palace?"

An hour later, had the boarders listened outside the flat of the head clerk, they would have heard issuing from his bathroom the cooling murmur of running water and from his gramophone the jubilant notes of "Alexander's Ragtime Band."

When in his private office Carroll was making a present of the royal suite to the head clerk, in the main office Hastings, the junior partner, was addressing "Champ" Thorne, the bond clerk. He addressed him familiarly and affectionately as "Champ." This was due partly to the fact that twenty-six years before Thorne had been christened Champneys and to the coincidence that he had captained the football eleven of one of the Big Three to the championship.

"Champ," said Mr. Hastings, "last month, when you asked me to raise your salary, the reason I didn't do it was not because you didn't deserve it, but because I believed if we gave you a raise you'd immediately get married."

The shoulders of the ex-football captain rose aggressively; he snorted with indignation.

"And why should I *not* get married?" he demanded. "You're a fine one to talk! You're

the most offensively happy married man I ever met."

"Perhaps I know I am happy better than you do," reproved the junior partner; "but I know also that it takes money to support a wife."

"You raise me to a hundred a week," urged Champ, "and I'll make it support a wife whether it supports me or not."

"A month ago," continued Hastings, "we could have *promised* you a hundred, but we didn't know how long we could pay it. We didn't want you to rush off and marry some fine girl——"

"Some fine girl!" muttered Mr. Thorne. "The finest girl!"

"The finer the girl," Hastings pointed out, "the harder it would have been for you if we had failed and you had lost your job."

The eyes of the young man opened with sympathy and concern.

"Is it as bad as that?" he murmured.

Hastings sighed happily.

"It *was*," he said, "but this morning the Young Man of Wall Street did us a good turn—saved us—saved our creditors, saved our homes, saved our honor. We're going to start fresh and pay our debts, and we agreed the first debt we paid would be the small one we owe you. You've

brought us more than we've given, and if you'll stay with us we're going to 'see' your fifty and raise it a hundred. What do you say?"

Young Mr. Thorne leaped to his feet. What he said was: "Where'n hell's my hat?"

But by the time he had found the hat and the door he mended his manners.

"I say, 'Thank you a thousand times,'" he shouted over his shoulder. "Excuse me, but I've got to go. I've got to break the news to——"

He did not explain to whom he was going to break the news; but Hastings must have guessed, for again he sighed happily and then, a little hysterically laughed aloud. Several months had passed since he had laughed aloud.

In his anxiety to break the news Champ Thorne almost broke his neck. In his excitement he could not remember whether the red flash meant the elevator was going down or coming up, and sooner than wait to find out he started to race down eighteen flights of stairs when fortunately the elevator-door swung open.

"You get five dollars," he announced to the elevator man, "if you drop to the street without a stop. Beat the speed limit! Act like the building is on fire and you're trying to save me before the roof falls."

Senator Barnes and his entire family, which was his daughter Barbara, were at the Ritz-Carlton. They were in town in August because there was a meeting of the directors of the Brazil and Cuyaba Rubber Company, of which company Senator Barnes was president. It was a secret meeting. Those directors who were keeping cool at the edge of the ocean had been summoned by telegraph; those who were steaming across the ocean, by wireless.

Up from the equator had drifted the threat of a scandal, sickening, grim, terrible. As yet it burned beneath the surface, giving out only an odor, but an odor as rank as burning rubber itself. At any moment it might break into flame. For the directors, was it the better wisdom to let the scandal smoulder, and take a chance, or to be the first to give the alarm, the first to lead the way to the horror and stamp it out?

It was to decide this that, in the heat of August, the directors and the president had forgathered.

Champ Thorne knew nothing of this; he knew only that by a miracle Barbara Barnes was in town; that at last he was in a position to ask her to marry him; that she would certainly say she would. That was all he cared to know.

A year before he had issued his declaration of independence. Before he could marry, he told her, he must be able to support a wife on what he earned, without her having to accept money from her father, and until he received "a minimum wage" of five thousand dollars they must wait.

"What is the matter with my father's money?" Barbara had demanded.

Thorne had evaded the direct question.

"There is too much of it," he said.

"Do you object to the way he makes it?" insisted Barbara. "Because rubber is most useful. You put it in golf balls and auto tires and galoches. There is nothing so perfectly respectable as galoches. And what is there 'tainted' about a raincoat?"

Thorne shook his head unhappily.

"It's not the finished product to which I refer," he stammered; "it's the way they get the raw material."

"They get it out of trees," said Barbara. Then she exclaimed with enlightenment—"Oh!" she cried, "you are thinking of the Congo. There it is terrible! *That* is slavery. But there are no slaves on the Amazon. The natives are free and the work is easy. They just tap the trees the

way the farmers gather sugar in Vermont. Father has told me about it often."

Thorne had made no comment. He could abuse a friend, if the friend were among those present, but denouncing any one he disliked as heartily as he disliked Senator Barnes was a public service he preferred to leave to others. And he knew besides that if the father she loved and the man she loved distrusted each other, Barbara would not rest until she learned the reason why.

One day, in a newspaper, Barbara read of the Puju Mayo atrocities, of the Indian slaves in the jungles and backwaters of the Amazon, who are offered up as sacrifices to "red rubber." She carried the paper to her father. What it said, her father told her, was untrue, and if it were true it was the first he had heard of it.

Senator Barnes loved the good things of life, but the thing he loved most was his daughter; the thing he valued the highest was her good opinion. So when for the first time she looked at him in doubt, he assured her he at once would order an investigation.

"But, of course," he added, "it will be many months before our agents can report. On the Amazon news travels very slowly."

In the eyes of his daughter the doubt still lingered.

"I am afraid," she said, "that that is true."

That was six months before the directors of the Brazil and Cuyaba Rubber Company were summoned to meet their president at his rooms in the Ritz-Carlton. They were due to arrive in half an hour, and while Senator Barnes awaited their coming Barbara came to him. In her eyes was a light that helped to tell the great news. It gave him a sharp, jealous pang. He wanted at once to play a part in her happiness, to make her grateful to him, not alone to this stranger who was taking her away. So fearful was he that she would shut him out of her life that had she asked for half his kingdom he would have parted with it.

"And besides giving my consent," said the rubber king, "for which no one seems to have asked, what can I give my little girl to make her remember her old father? Some diamonds to put on her head, or pearls to hang around her neck, or does she want a vacant lot on Fifth Avenue?"

The lovely hands of Barbara rested upon his shoulders; her lovely face was raised to his; her lovely eyes were appealing, and a little frightened.

"What would one of those things cost?" asked Barbara.

The question was eminently practical. It came within the scope of the senator's understanding. After all, he was not to be cast into outer darkness. His smile was complacent. He answered airily:

"Anything you like," he said; "a million dollars?"

The fingers closed upon his shoulders. The eyes, still frightened, still searched his in appeal.

"Then, for my wedding-present," said the girl, "I want you to take that million dollars and send an expedition to the Amazon. And I will choose the men. Men unafraid; men not afraid of fever or sudden death; not afraid to tell the truth —even to *you*. And all the world will know. And they—I mean *you*—will set those people free!"

Senator Barnes received the directors with an embarrassment which he concealed under a manner of just indignation.

"My mind is made up," he told them. "Existing conditions cannot continue. And to that end, at my own expense, I am sending an expedition across South America. It will investigate, punish, and establish reforms. I suggest, on

account of this damned heat, we do now adjourn."

That night, over on Long Island, Carroll told his wife all, or nearly all. He did not tell her about the automatic pistol. And together on tiptoe they crept to the nursery and looked down at their sleeping children. When she rose from her knees the mother said: "But how can I thank him?"

By "him" she meant the Young Man of Wall Street.

"You never can thank him," said Carroll; "that's the worst of it."

But after a long silence the mother said: "I will send him a photograph of the children. Do you think he will understand?"

Down at Seabright, Hastings and his wife walked in the sunken garden. The moon was so bright that the roses still held their color.

"I would like to thank him," said the young wife. She meant the Young Man of Wall Street. "But for him we would have lost *this*."

Her eyes caressed the garden, the fruit-trees, the house with wide, hospitable verandas. "Tomorrow I will send him some of these roses," said the young wife. "Will he understand that they mean our home?"

At a scandalously late hour, in a scandalous spirit of independence, Champ Thorne and Barbara were driving around Central Park in a taxicab.

"How strangely the Lord moves, his wonders to perform," misquoted Barbara. "Had not the Young Man of Wall Street saved Mr. Hastings, Mr. Hastings could not have raised your salary; you would not have asked me to marry you, and had you not asked me to marry you, father would not have given me a wedding-present, and——"

"And," said Champ, taking up the tale, "thousands of slaves would still be buried in the jungles, hidden away from their wives and children and the light of the sun and their fellow men. They still would be dying of fever, starvation, tortures."

He took her hand in both of his and held her finger-tips against his lips.

"And they will never know," he whispered, "when their freedom comes, that they owe it all to *you*."

On Hunter's Island, Jimmie Reeder and his bunkie, Sam Sturges, each on his canvas cot, tossed and twisted. The heat, the moonlight,

and the mosquitoes would not let them even think of sleep.

"That was bully," said Jimmie, "what you did to-day about saving that dog. If it hadn't been for you he'd ha' drownded."

"He would *not!*" said Sammy with punctilious regard for the truth; "it wasn't deep enough."

"Well, the scout-master ought to know," argued Jimmie; "he said it was the best 'one good turn' of the day!"

Modestly Sam shifted the lime-light so that it fell upon his bunkie.

"I'll bet," he declared loyally, "*your* 'one good turn' was a better one!"

Jimmie yawned, and then laughed scornfully.

"Me!" he scoffed. "I didn't do nothing. I sent my sister to the movies."

THE FRAME-UP

THE FRAME-UP

WHEN the voice over the telephone promised to name the man who killed Hermann Banf, District Attorney Wharton was up-town lunching at Delmonico's. This was contrary to his custom and a concession to Hamilton Cutler, his distinguished brother-in-law. That gentleman was interested in a State constabulary bill and had asked State Senator Bissell to father it. He had suggested to the senator that, in the legal points involved in the bill, his brother-in-law would undoubtedly be charmed to advise him. So that morning, to talk it over, Bissell had come from Albany and, as he was forced to return the same afternoon, had asked Wharton to lunch with him up-town near the station.

That in public life there breathed a man with soul so dead who, were he offered a chance to serve Hamilton Cutler, would not jump at the chance was outside the experience of the county chairman. And in so judging his fellow men, with the exception of one man, the senator was right. The one man was Hamilton Cutler's brother-in-law.

In the national affairs of his party Hamilton Cutler was one of the four leaders. In two cabinets he had held office. At a foreign court as an ambassador his dinners, of which the diplomatic corps still spoke with emotion, had upheld the dignity of ninety million Americans. He was rich. The history of his family was the history of the State. When the Albany boats drew abreast of the old Cutler mansion on the east bank of the Hudson the passengers pointed at it with deference. Even when the search-lights pointed at it, it was with deference. And on Fifth Avenue, as the "Seeing New York" car passed his town house it slowed respectfully to half speed. When, apparently for no other reason than that she was good and beautiful, he had married the sister of a then unknown up-State lawyer, every one felt Hamilton Cutler had made his first mistake. But, like everything else into which he entered, for him matrimony also was a success. The prettiest girl in Utica showed herself worthy of her distinguished husband. She had given him children as beautiful as herself; as what Washington calls "a cabinet lady" she had kept her name out of the newspapers; as Madame l'Ambassatrice she had put archduchesses at their ease; and after ten years she

was an adoring wife, a devoted mother, and a proud woman. Her pride was in believing that for every joy she knew she was indebted entirely to her husband. To owe everything to him, to feel that through him the blessings flowed, was her ideal of happiness.

In this ideal her brother did not share. Her delight in a sense of obligation left him quite cold. No one better than himself knew that his rapid-fire rise in public favor was due to his own exertions, to the fact that he had worked very hard, had been independent, had kept his hands clean, and had worn no man's collar. Other people believed he owed his advancement to his brother-in-law. He knew they believed that, and it hurt him. When, at the annual dinner of the Amen Corner, they burlesqued him as singing to "Ham" Cutler, "You made me what I am to-day, I hope you're sat-isfied," he found that to laugh with the others was something of an effort. His was a difficult position. He was a party man; he had always worked inside the organization. The fact that whenever he ran for an elective office the reformers indorsed him and the best elements in the opposition parties voted for him did not shake his loyalty to his own people. And to Hamilton Cutler, as one of his party leaders, as

one of the bosses of the "invisible government," he was willing to defer. But while he could give allegiance to his party leaders, and from them was willing to receive the rewards of office, from a rich brother-in-law he was not at all willing to accept anything. Still less was he willing that of the credit he deserved for years of hard work for the party, of self-denial, and of efficient public service the rich brother-in-law should rob him.

His pride was to be known as a self-made man, as the servant only of the voters. And now that he had fought his way to one of the goals of his ambition, now that he was district attorney of New York City, to have it said that the office was the gift of his brother-in-law was bitter. But he believed the injustice would soon end. In a month he was coming up for re-election, and night and day was conducting a campaign that he hoped would result in a personal victory so complete as to banish the shadow of his brother-in-law. Were he re-elected by the majority on which he counted, he would have the party leaders on their knees. Hamilton Cutler would be forced to come to him. He would be in line for promotion. He knew the leaders did not want to promote him, that they considered him too inclined to kick over the traces; but were he now re-elected, at the next election, either for mayor

or governor, he would be his party's obvious and legitimate candidate.

The re-election was not to be an easy victory. Outside his own party, to prevent his succeeding himself as district attorney, Tammany Hall was using every weapon in her armory. The commissioner of police was a Tammany man, and in the public prints Wharton had repeatedly declared that Banf, his star witness against the police, had been killed by the police, and that they had prevented the discovery of his murderer. For this the wigwam wanted his scalp, and to get it had raked his public and private life, had used threats and bribes, and with women had tried to trap him into a scandal. But "Big Tim" Meehan, the lieutenant the Hall had detailed to destroy Wharton, had reported back that for their purpose his record was useless, that bribes and threats only flattered him, and that the traps set for him he had smilingly side-stepped. This was the situation a month before election day when, to oblige his brother-in-law, Wharton was up-town at Delmonico's lunching with Senator Bissell.

Down-town at the office, Rumson, the assistant district attorney, was on his way to lunch when the telephone-girl halted him. Her voice was lowered and betrayed almost human interest.

From the corner of her mouth she whispered:

"This man has a note for Mr. Wharton—says if he don't get it quick it'll be too late—says it will tell him who killed 'Heimie' Banf!"

The young man and the girl looked at each other and smiled. Their experience had not tended to make them credulous. Had he lived, Hermann Banf would have been, for Wharton, the star witness against a ring of corrupt police officials. In consequence his murder was more than the taking off of a shady and disreputable citizen. It was a blow struck at the high office of the district attorney, at the grand jury, and the law. But, so far, whoever struck the blow had escaped punishment, and though for a month, ceaselessly, by night and day "the office" and the police had sought him, he was still at large, still "unknown." There had been hundreds of clews. They had been furnished by the detectives of the city and county and of the private agencies, by amateurs, by newspapers, by members of the underworld with a score to pay off or to gain favor. But no clew had led anywhere. When, in hoarse whispers, the last one had been confided to him by his detectives, Wharton had protested indignantly.

"Stop bringing me clews!" he exclaimed. "I want the man. I can't electrocute a clew!"

So when, after all other efforts, over the telephone a strange voice offered to deliver the murderer, Rumson was sceptical. He motioned the girl to switch to the desk telephone.

"Assistant District Attorney Rumson speaking," he said. "What can I do for you?"

Before the answer came, as though the speaker were choosing his words, there was a pause. It lasted so long that Rumson exclaimed sharply:

"Hello," he called. "Do you want to speak to me, or do you want to speak to me?"

"I've gotta letter for the district attorney," said the voice. "I'm to give it to nobody but him. It's about Banf. He must get it quick, or it'll be too late."

"Who are you?" demanded Rumson. "Where are you speaking from?"

The man at the other end of the wire ignored the questions.

"Where'll Wharton be for the next twenty minutes?"

"If I tell you," parried Rumson, "will you bring the letter at once?"

The voice exclaimed indignantly:

"Bring nothing! I'll send it by district messenger. You're wasting time trying to reach me. It's the *letter you* want. It tells"—the voice

broke with an oath and instantly began again: "I can't talk over a phone. I tell you, it's life or death. If you lose out, it's your own fault. Where can I find Wharton?"

"At Delmonico's," answered Rumson. "He'll be there until two o'clock."

"Delmonico's! That's Forty-fort Street?"

"Right," said Rumson. "Tell the messenger——"

He heard the receiver slam upon the hook.

With the light of the hunter in his eyes, he turned to the girl.

"They can laugh," he cried, "but I believe we've hooked something. I'm going after it."

In the waiting-room he found the detectives.

"Hewitt," he ordered, "take the subway and whip up to Delmonico's. Talk to the taxi-starter till a messenger-boy brings a letter for the D. A. Let the boy deliver the note, and then trail him till he reports to the man he got it from. Bring the man here. If it's a district messenger and he doesn't report, but goes straight back to the office, find out who gave him the note; get his description. Then meet me at Delmonico's."

Rumson called up that restaurant and had Wharton come to the phone. He asked his chief to wait until a letter he believed to be of great

importance was delivered to him. He explained, but, of necessity, somewhat sketchily.

"It sounds to me," commented his chief, "like a plot of yours to get a lunch up-town."

"Invitation!" cried Rumson. "I'll be with you in ten minutes."

After Rumson had joined Wharton and Bissell the note arrived. It was brought to the restaurant by a messenger-boy, who said that in answer to a call from a saloon on Sixth Avenue he had received it from a young man in ready-to-wear clothes and a green hat. When Hewitt, the detective, asked what the young man looked like, the boy said he looked like a young man in ready-to-wear clothes and a green hat. But when the note was read the identity of the man who delivered it ceased to be of importance. The paper on which it was written was without stamped address or monogram, and carried with it the mixed odors of the drug-store at which it had been purchased. The handwriting was that of a woman, and what she had written was: "If the district attorney will come at once, and alone, to Kessler's Café, on the Boston Post Road, near the city line, he will be told who killed Hermann Banf. If he don't come in an hour, it will be too late. If he brings anybody with him, he

won't be told anything. Leave your car in the road and walk up the drive. Ida Earle."

Hewitt, who had sent away the messenger-boy and had been called in to give expert advice, was enthusiastic.

"Mr. District Attorney," he cried, "that's no crank letter. This Earle woman is wise. You got to take her as a serious proposition. She wouldn't make that play if she couldn't get away with it."

"Who is she?" asked Wharton.

To the police, the detective assured them, Ida Earle had been known for years. When she was young she had been under the protection of a man high in the ranks of Tammany, and, in consequence, with her different ventures the police had never interfered. She now was proprietress of the road-house in the note described as Kessler's Café. It was a place for joy-riders. There was a cabaret, a hall for public dancing, and rooms for very private suppers.

In so far as it welcomed only those who could spend money it was exclusive, but in all other respects its reputation was of the worst. In situation it was lonely, and from other houses separated by a quarter of a mile of dying trees and vacant lots.

The Boston Post Road upon which it faced was the old post road, but lately, through this back yard and dumping-ground of the city, had been relaid. It was patrolled only and infrequently by bicycle policemen.

"But this," continued the detective eagerly, "is where we win out. The road-house is an old farm-house built over, with the barns changed into garages. They stand on the edge of a wood. It's about as big as a city block. If we come in through the woods from the rear, the garages will hide us. Nobody in the house can see us, but we won't be a hundred yards away. You've only to blow a police whistle and we'll be with you."

"You mean I ought to go?" said Wharton.

Rumson exclaimed incredulously:

"You *got* to go!"

"It looks to me," objected Bissell, "like a plot to get you there alone and rap you on the head."

"Not with that note inviting him there," protested Hewitt, "and signed by Earle herself."

"You don't know she signed it?" objected the senator.

"I know *her*," returned the detective. "I know she's no fool. It's her place, and she wouldn't let them pull off any rough stuff there—not against the D. A., anyway."

The D. A. was rereading the note.

"Might this be it?" he asked. "Suppose it's a trick to mix me up in a scandal? You say the place is disreputable. Suppose they're planning to compromise me just before election. They've tried it already several times."

"You've still got the note," persisted Hewitt. "It proves *why* you went there. And the senator, too. He can testify. And we won't be a hundred yards away. And," he added grudgingly, "you have Nolan."

Nolan was the spoiled child of "the office." He was the district attorney's pet. Although still young, he had scored as a detective and as a driver of racing-cars. As Wharton's chauffeur he now doubled the parts.

"What Nolan testified wouldn't be any help," said Wharton. "They would say it was just a story he invented to save me."

"Then square yourself this way," urged Rumson. "Send a note now by hand to Ham Cutler and one to your sister. Tell *them* you're going to Ida Earle's—and why—tell them you're afraid it's a frame-up, and for them to keep your notes as evidence. And enclose the one from her."

Wharton nodded in approval, and, while he wrote, Rumson and the detective planned how,

without those inside the road-house being aware of their presence, they might be near it.

Kessler's Café lay in the Seventy-ninth Police Precinct. In taxi-cabs they arranged to start at once and proceed down White Plains Avenue, which parallels the Boston Road, until they were on a line with Kessler's, but from it hidden by the woods and the garages. A walk of a quarter of a mile across lots and under cover of the trees would bring them to within a hundred yards of the house.

Wharton was to give them a start of half an hour. That he might know they were on watch, they agreed, after they dismissed the taxi-cabs, to send one of them into the Boston Post Road past the road-house. When it was directly in front of the café, the chauffeur would throw away into the road an empty cigarette-case.

From the cigar-stand they selected a cigarette box of a startling yellow. At half a mile it was conspicuous.

"When you see this in the road," explained Rumson, "you'll know we're on the job. And after you're inside, if you need us, you've only to go to a rear window and wave."

"If they mean to do him up," growled Bissell, "he won't get to a rear window."

"He can always tell them we're outside," said Rumson—"and they are extremely likely to believe him. Do you want a gun?"

"No," said the D. A.

"Better have mine," urged Hewitt.

"I have my own," explained the D. A.

Rumson and Hewitt set off in taxi-cabs and, a half-hour later, Wharton followed. As he sank back against the cushions of the big touring-car he felt a pleasing thrill of excitement, and as he passed the traffic police, and they saluted mechanically, he smiled. Had they guessed his errand their interest in his progress would have been less perfunctory. In half an hour he might know that the police killed Banf; in half an hour he himself might walk into a trap they had, in turn, staged for him. As the car ran swiftly through the clean October air, and the wind and sun alternately chilled and warmed his blood, Wharton considered these possibilities.

He could not believe the woman Earle would lend herself to any plot to do him bodily harm. She was a responsible person. In her own world she was as important a figure as was the district attorney in his. Her allies were the men "higher up" in Tammany and the police of the upper ranks of the uniformed force. And of the higher

office of the district attorney she possessed an intimate and respectful knowledge. It was not to be considered that against the prosecuting attorney such a woman would wage war. So the thought that upon his person any assault was meditated Wharton dismissed as unintelligent. That it was upon his reputation the attack was planned seemed much more probable. But that contingency he had foreseen and so, he believed, forestalled. There then remained only the possibility that the offer in the letter was genuine. It seemed quite too good to be true. For, as he asked himself, on the very eve of an election, why should Tammany, or a friend of Tammany, place in his possession the information that to the Tammany candidate would bring inevitable defeat. He felt that the way they were playing into his hands was too open, too generous. If their object was to lead him into a trap, of all baits they might use the promise to tell him who killed Banf was the one certain to attract him. It made their invitation to walk into the parlor almost too obvious. But were the offer not genuine, there was a condition attached to it that puzzled him. It was not the condition that stipulated he should come alone. His experience had taught him many will confess, or betray, to the district at-

torney who, to a deputy, will tell nothing. The condition that puzzled him was the one that insisted he should come at once or it would be "too late."

Why was haste so imperative? Why, if he delayed, would he be "too late"? Was the man he sought about to escape from his jurisdiction, was he dying, and was it his wish to make a death-bed confession; or was he so reluctant to speak that delay might cause him to reconsider and remain silent?

With these questions in his mind, the minutes quickly passed, and it was with a thrill of excitement Wharton saw that Nolan had left the Zoological Gardens on the right and turned into the Boston Road. It had but lately been completed and to Wharton was unfamiliar. On either side of the unscarred roadway still lay scattered the uprooted trees and bowlders that had blocked its progress, and abandoned by the contractors were empty tar-barrels, cement-sacks, tool-sheds, and forges. Nor was the surrounding landscape less raw and unlovely. Toward the Sound stretched vacant lots covered with ash heaps; to the left a few old and broken houses set among the glass-covered cold frames of truck-farms.

The district attorney felt a sudden twinge of

loneliness. And when an automobile sign told him he was "10 miles from Columbus Circle," he felt that from the New York he knew he was much farther. Two miles up the road his car overhauled a bicycle policeman, and Wharton halted him.

"Is there a road-house called Kessler's beyond here?" he asked.

"On the left, farther up," the officer told him, and added: "You can't miss it, Mr. Wharton; there's no other house near it."

"You know me," said the D. A. "Then you'll understand what I want you to do. I've agreed to go to that house alone. If they see you pass they may think I'm not playing fair. So stop here."

The man nodded and dismounted.

"But," added the district attorney, as the car started forward again, "if you hear shots, I don't care how fast you come."

The officer grinned.

"Better let me trail along now," he called; "that's a tough joint."

But Wharton motioned him back; and when again he turned to look the man still stood where they had parted.

Two minutes later an empty taxi-cab came

swiftly toward him and, as it passed, the driver lifted his hand from the wheel and with his thumb motioned behind him.

"That's one of the men," said Nolan, "that started with Mr. Rumson and Hewitt from Delmonico's."

Wharton nodded; and, now assured that in their plan there had been no hitch, smiled with satisfaction. A moment later, when ahead of them on the asphalt road Nolan pointed out a spot of yellow, he recognized the signal and knew that within call were friends.

The yellow ciagarette-box lay directly in front of a long wooden building of two stories. It was linked to the road by a curving driveway marked on either side by whitewashed stones. On verandas enclosed in glass Wharton saw white-covered tables under red candle-shades and, protruding from one end of the house and hung with electric lights in paper lanterns, a pavilion for dancing. In the rear of the house stood sheds and a thick tangle of trees on which the autumn leaves showed yellow. Painted fingers and arrows pointing, and an electric sign, proclaimed to all who passed that this was Kessler's. In spite of its reputation, the house wore the aspect of the commonplace. In evidence nothing flaunted,

nothing threatened. From a dozen other inns along the Pelham Parkway and the Boston Post Road it was in no way to be distinguished.

As directed in the note, Wharton left the car in the road. "For five minutes stay where you are," he ordered Nolan; "then go to the bar and get a drink. Don't talk to any one or they'll think you're trying to get information. Work around to the back of the house. Stand where I can see you from the window. I may want you to carry a message to Mr. Rumson."

On foot Wharton walked up the curving driveway, and if from the house his approach was spied upon, there was no evidence. In the second story the blinds were drawn and on the first floor the verandas were empty. Nor, not even after he had mounted to the veranda and stepped inside the house, was there any sign that his visit was expected. He stood in a hall, and in front of him rose a broad flight of stairs that he guessed led to the private supper-rooms. On his left was the restaurant.

Swept and garnished after the revels of the night previous, and as though resting in preparation for those to come, it wore an air of peaceful inactivity. At a table a maitre d'hôtel was composing the menu for the evening, against the walls

three colored waiters lounged sleepily, and on a platform at a piano a pale youth with drugged eyes was with one hand picking an accompaniment. As Wharton paused uncertainly the young man, disdaining his audience, in a shrill, nasal tenor raised his voice and sang:

"And from the time the rooster calls
I'll wear my overalls,
And you, a simple gingham gown.
So, if you're strong for a shower of rice,
We two could make a paradise
Of any One-Horse Town."

At sight of Wharton the head waiter reluctantly detached himself from his menu and rose. But before he could greet the visitor, Wharton heard his name spoken and, looking up, saw a woman descending the stairs. It was apparent that when young she had been beautiful, and, in spite of an expression in her eyes of hardness and distrust, which seemed habitual, she was still handsome. She was without a hat and wearing a house dress of decorous shades and in the extreme of fashion. Her black hair, built up in artificial waves, was heavy with brilliantine; her hands, covered deep with rings, and of an unnatural white, showed the most fastidious care. But her complexion was her own; and her skin,

free from paint and powder, glowed with that healthy pink that is supposed to be the perquisite only of the simple life and a conscience undisturbed.

"I am Mrs. Earle," said the woman. "I wrote you that note. Will you please come this way?"

That she did not suppose he might not come that way was obvious, for, as she spoke, she turned her back on him and mounted the stairs. After an instant of hesitation, Wharton followed.

As well as his mind, his body was now acutely alive and vigilant. Both physically and mentally he moved on tiptoe. For whatever surprise, for whatever ambush might lie in wait, he was prepared. At the top of the stairs he found a wide hall along which on both sides were many doors. The one directly facing the stairs stood open. At one side of this the woman halted and with a gesture of the jewelled fingers invited him to enter.

"My sitting-room," she said. As Wharton remained motionless she substituted: "My office."

Peering into the room, Wharton found it suited to both titles. He saw comfortable chairs, vases filled with autumn leaves, in silver frames photographs, and between two open windows a business-like roller-top desk on which was a hand tele-

phone. In plain sight through the windows he beheld the garage and behind it the tops of trees. To summon Rumson, to keep in touch with Nolan, he need only step to one of these windows and beckon. The strategic position of the room appealed, and with a bow of the head he passed in front of his hostess and entered it. He continued to take note of his surroundings.

He now saw that from the office in which he stood doors led to rooms adjoining. These doors were shut, and he determined swiftly that before the interview began he first must know what lay behind them. Mrs. Earle had followed and, as she entered, closed the door.

"No!" said Wharton.

It was the first time he had spoken. For an instant the woman hesitated, regarding him thoughtfully, and then without resentment pulled the door open. She came toward him swiftly, and he was conscious of the rustle of silk and the stirring of perfumes. At the open door she cast a frown of disapproval and then, with her face close to his, spoke hurriedly in a whisper.

"A man brought a girl here to lunch," she said; "they've been here before. The girl claims the man told her he was going to marry her. Last night she found out he has a wife already, and

she came here to-day meaning to make trouble. She brought a gun. They were in the room at the far end of the hall. George, the waiter, heard the two shots and ran down here to get me. No one else heard. These rooms are fixed to keep out noise, and the piano was going. We broke in and found them on the floor. The man was shot through the shoulder, the girl through the body. His story is that after she fired, in trying to get the gun from her, she shot herself—by accident. That's right, I guess. But the girl says they came here to die together—what the newspaper call a 'suicide pact'—because they couldn't marry, and that he first shot her, intending to kill her and then himself. That's silly. She framed it to get him. She missed him with the gun, so now she's trying to get him with this murder charge. I know her. If she'd been sober she wouldn't have shot him; she'd have blackmailed him. She's *that* sort. I know her, and——"

With an exclamation the district attorney broke in upon her. "And the man," he demanded eagerly; "was it *he* killed Banf?"

In amazement the woman stared. "Certainly *not!*" she said.

"Then what *has* this to do with Banf?"

"Nothing!" Her tone was annoyed, reproachful. "That was only to bring you here——"

His disappointment was so keen that it threatened to exhibit itself in anger. Recognizing this, before he spoke Wharton forced himself to pause. Then he repeated her words quietly.

"Bring me here?" he asked. "Why?"

The woman exclaimed impatiently: "So you could beat the police to it," she whispered. "So you could *hush it up!*"

The surprised laugh of the man was quite real. It bore no resentment or pose. He was genuinely amused. Then the dignity of his office, tricked and insulted, demanded to be heard. He stared at her coldly; his indignation was apparent.

"You have done extremely ill," he told her. "You know perfectly well you had no right to bring me up here; to drag me into a row in your road-house. 'Hush it up!'" he exclaimed hotly. This time his laugh was contemptuous and threatening.

"I'll show you how I'll hush it up!" He moved quickly to the open window.

"Stop!" commanded the woman. "You can't do that!"

She ran to the door.

Again he was conscious of the rustle of silk, of the stirring of perfumes.

He heard the key turn in the lock. It had come. It WAS a frame-up. There would be a scandal. And to save himself from it they would force him to "hush up" this other one. But, as to the outcome, in no way was he concerned. Through the window, standing directly below it, he had seen Nolan. In the sunlit yard the chauffeur, his cap on the back of his head, his cigarette drooping from his lips, was tossing the remnants of a sandwich to a circle of excited hens. He presented a picture of bored indolence, of innocent preoccupation. It was almost *too* well done.

Assured of a witness for the defense, he greeted the woman with a smile. "Why can't I do it?" he taunted.

She ran close to him and laid her hands on his arm. Her eyes were fixed steadily on his. "Because," she whispered, "the man who shot that girl—is your brother-in-law, Ham Cutler!"

For what seemed a long time Wharton stood looking down into the eyes of the woman, and the eyes never faltered. Later he recalled that in the sudden silence many noises disturbed the lazy hush of the Indian-summer afternoon: the

rush of a motor-car on the Boston Road, the tinkle of the piano and the voice of the youth with the drugged eyes singing, "And you'll wear a simple gingham gown," from the yard below the cluck-cluck of the chickens and the cooing of pigeons.

His first thought was of his sister and of her children, and of what this bomb, hurled from the clouds, would mean to her. He thought of Cutler, at the height of his power and usefulness, by this one disreputable act dragged into the mire, of what disaster it might bring to the party, to himself.

If, as the woman invited, he helped to "hush it up," and Tammany learned the truth, it would make short work of him. It would say, for the murderer of Banf he had one law and for the rich brother-in-law, who had tried to kill the girl he deceived, another. But before he gave voice to his thoughts he recognized them as springing only from panic. They were of a part with the acts of men driven by sudden fear, and of which acts in their sane moments they would be incapable.

The shock of the woman's words had unsettled his traditions. Not only was he condemning a man unheard, but a man who, though he might dislike him, he had for years, for his private vir-

tues, trusted and admired. The panic passed and with a confident smile he shook his head.

"I don't believe you," he said quietly.

The manner of the woman was equally calm, equally assured.

"Will you see her?" she asked.

"I'd rather see my brother-in-law," he answered.

The woman handed him a card.

"Doctor Muir took him to his private hospital," she said. "I loaned them my car because it's a limousine. The address is on that card. But," she added, "both your brother and Sammy—that's Sam Muir, the doctor—asked you wouldn't use the telephone; they're afraid of a leak."

Apparently Wharton did not hear her. As though it were "Exhibit A," presented in evidence by the defense, he was studying the card she had given him. He stuck it in his pocket.

"I'll go to him at once," he said.

To restrain or dissuade him, the woman made no sudden move. In level tones she said: "Your brother-in-law asked especially that you wouldn't do that until you'd fixed it with the girl. Your face is too well known. He's afraid some one might find out where he is—and for a day or two no one must know that."

"This doctor knows it," retorted Wharton.

The suggestion seemed to strike Mrs. Earle as humorous. For the first time she laughed.

"Sammy!" she exclaimed. "He's a lobbygow of mine. He's worked for me for years. I could send him up the river if I liked. He knows it." Her tone was convincing. "They both asked," she continued evenly, "you should keep off until the girl is out of the country, and fixed."

Wharton frowned thoughtfully.

And, observing this, the eyes of the woman showed that, so far, toward the unfortunate incident the attitude of the district attorney was to her most gratifying.

Wharton ceased frowning.

"How fixed?" he asked.

Mrs. Earle shrugged her shoulders.

"Cutler's idea is money," she said; "but, believe *me*, he's wrong. This girl is a vampire. She'll only come back to you for more. She'll keep on threatening to tell the wife, to tell the papers. The way to fix *her* is to throw a scare into her. And there's only one man can do that; there's only one man that can hush this thing up—that's you."

"When can I see her?" asked Wharton.

"Now," said the woman. "I'll bring her."

Wharton could not suppress an involuntary start.

"Here?" he exclaimed.

For the shade of a second Mrs. Earle exhibited the slightest evidence of embarrassment.

"My room's in a mess," she explained; "and she's not hurt so much as Sammy said. He told her she was in bad just to keep her quiet until you got here."

Mrs. Earle opened one of the doors leading from the room. "I won't be a minute," she said. Quietly she closed the door behind her.

Upon her disappearance the manner of the district attorney underwent an abrupt change. He ran softly to the door opposite the one through which Mrs. Earle had passed, and pulled it open. But, if beyond it he expected to find an audience of eavesdroppers, he was disappointed. The room was empty—and bore no evidence of recent occupation. He closed the door, and, from the roller-top desk, snatching a piece of paper, scribbled upon it hastily. Wrapping the paper around a coin, and holding it exposed to view, he showed himself at the window. Below him, to an increasing circle of hens and pigeons, Nolan was still scattering crumbs. Without withdrawing his gaze from them, the chauffeur nodded. Wharton

opened his hand and the note fell into the yard. Behind him he heard the murmur of voices, the sobs of a woman in pain, and the rattle of a door-knob. As from the window he turned quickly, he saw that toward the spot where his note had fallen Nolan was tossing the last remnants of his sandwich.

The girl who entered with Mrs. Earle, leaning on her and supported by her, was tall and fair. Around her shoulders her blond hair hung in disorder, and around her waist, under the kimono Mrs. Earle had thrown about her, were wrapped many layers of bandages. The girl moved unsteadily and sank into a chair.

In a hostile tone Mrs. Earle addressed her.

"Rose," she said, "this is the district attorney." To him she added: "She calls herself Rose Gerard."

One hand the girl held close against her side, with the other she brushed back the hair from her forehead. From half-closed eyes she stared at Wharton defiantly.

"Well," she challenged, "what about it?"

Wharton seated himself in front of the roller-top desk.

"Are you strong enough to tell me?" he asked.

His tone was kind, and this the girl seemed to resent.

"Don't you worry," she sneered, "I'm strong enough. Strong enough to tell *all* I know—to you, and to the papers, and to a jury—until I get justice." She clinched her free hand and feebly shook it at him. "*That's* what I'm going to get," she cried, her voice breaking hysterically, "justice."

From behind the armchair in which the girl half-reclined Mrs. Earle caught the eye of the district attorney and shrugged her shoulders.

"Just what *did* happen?" asked Wharton.

Apparently with an effort the girl pulled herself together.

"I first met your brother-in-law—" she began.

Wharton interrupted quietly.

"Wait!" he said. "You are not talking to me as anybody's brother-in-law, but as the district attorney."

The girl laughed vindictively.

"I don't wonder you're ashamed of him!" she jeered.

Again she began: "I first met Ham Cutler last May. He wanted to marry me then. He told me he was not a married man."

As her story unfolded, Wharton did not again

interrupt; and speaking quickly, in abrupt, broken phrases, the girl brought her narrative to the moment when, as she claimed, Cutler had attempted to kill her. At this point a knock at the locked door caused both the girl and her audience to start. Wharton looked at Mrs. Earle inquiringly, but she shook her head, and with a look at him also of inquiry, and of suspicion as well, opened the door.

With apologies her head waiter presented a letter.

"For Mr. Wharton," he explained, "from his chauffeur."

Wharton's annoyance at the interruption was most apparent. "What the devil—" he began.

He read the note rapidly, and with a frown of irritation raised his eyes to Mrs. Earle.

"He wants to go to New Rochelle for an inner tube," he said. "How long would it take him to get there and back?"

The hard and distrustful expression upon the face of Mrs. Earle, which was habitual, was now most strongly in evidence. Her eyes searched those of Wharton.

"Twenty minutes," she said.

"He can't go," snapped Wharton.

"Tell him," he directed the waiter, "to stay

where he is. Tell him I may want to go back to the office any minute." He turned eagerly to the girl. "I'm sorry," he said. With impatience he crumpled the note into a ball and glanced about him. At his feet was a waste-paper basket. Fixed upon him he saw, while pretending not to see, the eyes of Mrs. Earle burning with suspicion. If he destroyed the note, he knew suspicion would become certainty. Without an instant of hesitation, carelessly he tossed it intact into the waste-paper basket. Toward Rose Gerard he swung the revolving chair.

"Go on, please," he commanded.

The girl had now reached the climax of her story, but the eyes of Mrs. Earle betrayed the fact that her thoughts were elsewhere. With an intense and hungry longing, they were concentrated upon her own waste-paper basket.

The voice of the girl in anger and defiance recalled Mrs. Earle to the business of the moment.

"He tried to kill me," shouted Miss Rose. "And his shooting himself in the shoulder was a bluff. *That's* my story; that's the story I'm going to tell the judge"—her voice soared shrilly —"that's the story that's going to send your brother-in-law to Sing Sing!"

For the first time Mrs. Earle contributed to the general conversation.

"You talk like a fish," she said.

The girl turned upon her savagely.

"If he don't like the way I talk," she cried, "he can come across!"

Mrs. Earle exclaimed in horror. Virtuously her hands were raised in protest.

"Like hell he will!" she said. "You can't pull that under my roof!"

Wharton looked disturbed.

"'Come across'?" he asked.

"Come across?" mimicked the girl. "Send me abroad and keep me there. And I'll swear it was an accident. Twenty-five thousand, that's all I want. Cutler told me he was going to make you governor. He can't make you governor if he's in Sing Sing, can he? Ain't it worth twenty-five thousand to you to be governor? Come on," she jeered, "kick in!"

With a grave but untroubled voice Wharton addressed Mrs. Earle.

"May I use your telephone?" he asked. He did not wait for her consent, but from the desk lifted the hand telephone.

"Spring, three one hundred!" he said. He sat with his legs comfortably crossed, the stand

of the instrument balanced on his knee, his eyes gazing meditatively at the yellow tree-tops.

If with apprehension both women started, if the girl thrust herself forward, and by the hand of Mrs. Earle was dragged back, he did not appear to know it.

"Police headquarters?" they heard him ask. "I want to speak to the commissioner. This is the district attorney."

In the pause that followed, as though to torment her, the pain in her side apparently returned, for the girl screamed sharply.

"Be still!" commanded the older woman. Breathless, across the top of the armchair, she was leaning forward. Upon the man at the telephone her eyes were fixed in fascination.

"Commissioner," said the district attorney, "this is Wharton speaking. A woman has made a charge of attempted murder to me against my brother-in-law, Hamilton Cutler. On account of our relationship, I want YOU to make the arrest. If there were any slip, and he got away, it might be said I arranged it. You will find him at the Winona apartments on the Southern Boulevard, in the private hospital of a Doctor Samuel Muir. Arrest them both. The girl who makes the charge is at Kessler's Café, on the Boston Post Road,

just inside the city line. Arrest her too. She tried to blackmail me. I'll appear against her."

Wharton rose and addressed himself to Mrs. Earle.

"I'm sorry," he said, "but I had to do it. You might have known I could not hush it up. I am the only man who can't hush it up. The people of New York elected me to enforce the laws." Wharton's voice was raised to a loud pitch. It seemed unnecessarily loud. It was almost as though he were addressing another and more distant audience. "And," he continued, his voice still soaring, "even if my own family suffer, even if I suffer, even if I lose political promotion, those laws I will enforce!"

In the more conventional tone of every-day politeness, he added:

"May I speak to you outside, Mrs. Earle?"

But, as in silence that lady descended the stairs, the district attorney seemed to have forgotten what it was he wished to say.

It was not until he had seen his chauffeur arouse himself from apparently deep slumber and crank the car that he addressed her.

"That girl," he said, "had better go back to bed. My men are all around this house and, until the police come, will detain her."

He shook the jewelled fingers of Mrs. Earle warmly. "I thank you," he said; "I know you meant well. I know you wanted to help me, but"—he shrugged his shoulders—"my duty!"

As he walked down the driveway to his car his shoulders continued to move.

But Mrs. Earle did not wait to observe this phenomenon. Rid of his presence, she leaped, rather than ran, up the stairs and threw open the door of her office.

As she entered, two men followed her. One was a young man who held in his hand an open note-book, the other was Tim Meehan, of Tammany. The latter greeted her with a shout.

"We heard everything he said!" he cried. His voice rose in torment. "An' we can't use a word of it! He acted just like we'd oughta knowed he'd act. He's HONEST! He's so damned honest he ain't human; he's a —— gilded saint!"

Mrs. Earle did not heed him. On her knees she was tossing to the floor the contents of the waste-paper basket. From them she snatched a piece of crumpled paper.

"Shut up!" she shouted. "Listen! His chauffeur brought him this." In a voice that quivered with indignation, that sobbed with anger, she read aloud:

"'As directed by your note from the window, I went to the booth and called up Mrs. Cutler's house and got herself on the phone. Your brother-in-law lunched at home to-day with her and the children and they are now going to the Hippodrome.

"'Stop, look, and listen! Back of the bar I see two men in a room, but they did not see me. One is Tim Meehan, the other is a stenographer. He is taking notes. Each of them has on the ear-muffs of a dictagraph. Looks like you'd better watch your step and not say nothing you don't want Tammany to print.'" The voice of Mrs. Earle rose in a shrill shriek.

"Him—a gilded saint?" she screamed; "you big stiff! He knew he was talking into a dictagraph all the time—and he double-crossed us!"

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